

# **Foundations of Youth Ministry**

**By Ron Powell**



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# Welcome

Welcome to the important study of youth and youth ministry. I hope that this will both challenge and inspire you! Wide margins have been set aside so that you can make your own notes, comments, or questions. I hope that you will find studying through this material very helpful as you work with youth. If at any point you wish to contact me, I can be reached at [ron.powell@vanguardcollege.com](mailto:ron.powell@vanguardcollege.com)

Ron Powell

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## Introduction

The foundations for any structure take longer than most of the rest put together. Jesus advises us to take very careful consideration of the foundation for our personal lives. People who hear Jesus teaching and put it into practice are considered wise. Those who work with you and take time to carefully consider the proper foundations to their ministry would fit into the same category.

As you read through this self study I hope that you will be able to put some of the ideas into practice where you serve. There may be some parts of this book that don't seem essential in your ministry right now but they could become foundational to things that you will do in the future. I invite you to look into these things, work through the chapters and return to them at a deeper level in the future.

Of course this is not the only youth ministry text around. I have tried to take important information from a number of sources. Much of what you see here has been communicated to youth ministry students in a few different Canadian provinces. If you fall asleep while reading you are in the company of youth pastors who are now leading this countries youth ministries!

In this book I have mentioned other excellent youth ministry books that I strongly encourage you to read. In fact you may want to put this one down and read theirs instead or alongside this one. One widely read text is Doug Fields, Purpose Driven Youth Ministry. Another one that I strongly recommend is Junior High youth ministry. Both of these books provide excellent advice for running a youth ministry.

That being said, I hope I have included many of the foundational materials you can use to make a difference in the lives of teens.

# Part One Youth Ministry Foundations

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## Chapter 1 A Philosophy of Youth Ministry

### Introduction

There is a huge difference between knowing a theory and applying it. After years of teaching youth ministry I find as never before that the real world is not the ideal world. In a perfect world all of the text book answers to doing effective youth ministry to teens would be effective. In a perfect world all of the counseling techniques in the books would bring desired results of young people. So do we toss our books in the air in futility? No, we continue to aim for excellence.

John Dettoni who teaches youth ministry at Fuller Seminary explains that a philosophy of youth ministry is a "personal north star providing direction for planning and program implementation. " I like this definition because it isn't an impossible dream like trying to reach that north star would be. Instead it is a compass providing guidance in a complex world. It helps us have a response to the pull and sway of popular trends, instant growth ideas, and sometimes not so subtle pressure of people with personal agendas. I hope that you will begin to discern what is important in a ministry; that you will begin to develop your own philosophy/ theology of youth ministry as you continue to interact with the text book.

### Reasons for a Theology/ Philosophy of Youth Ministry

#### ***1. Provides assurance of God's blessing:***

Psalm 27 explains that unless the Lord builds the house it is built in vain. The entire Bible provides ample evidence that there are those who start out to do good and miss the will of God. Kings make wrong judgments that plunge the people of God into horrific sin just begging for the wrath of God. That's not what we want in ministry. We want to make correct choices that secure the blessing of God. The famous

missionary William Carey often stated that God's work done in God's way would never lack God's supply. A direction to a ministry that honours God and takes his word seriously will never be a waste of time. On the contrary if neglect God's word and build a ministry that can draw big numbers because we provide free drugs and alcohol –we may feel successful, or even appear successful in some people's eyes but the fruit of that labour will be rotten. In the same way that a good life will bear good fruit a godly ministry will bear good fruit.

## ***2. Provides a foundation for setting Goals***

I know too many people that are a lot like me. (makes the world a scary place...) If you are like me, you don't like to ask for directions, and when you get lost, you speed up. We don't know where we are going but we are getting there fast! When I lose sight of my philosophy of youth ministry its like forgetting my map. I have a vague sense of where I am supposed to go but like people lost in the woods I just circle to the left. When my philosophy is front in center of my desk and each of my activities even the seemingly meaningless activities work toward fulfilling that vision. When I sit down with my ministry team and we plan out an activity if the philosophy of ministry is referred to often, our goals, programs and events, line up. We realize that we are getting somewhere and are not just spinning our wheels in the sand.

## ***3. Helps keep ministry consistent despite trends***

Have you seen the latest best selling youth ministry book? Will reading it radically revolutionize your youth ministry, or will you pick up a few good ideas for your group? If you are ready to ditch your program and go on some new crusade every time you read a book, lets hope you don't read too many. When the youth group down the street starts to grow in leaps and bounds and yours is struggling will you ditch your programs and imitate what the growing group is doing. The temptation can be strong, especially if you are constantly being compared to that group but the youth and their parents. Likewise, when a new book hits the shelves emphasizing teens need to be delivered from their past, or to be prophesied over, or to have all decisions made by a "shepherd" over them, you will steer clear of these mine fields because you have a carefully thought through theologically sound approach to ministry. These fads seem to come and go through the churches. With a carefully considered philosophy of ministry you will be able to recognize these forces and steer clear of the dangers. (Just as an aside, it could be the parents who are pushing you to do what some other church is doing, or what some best selling Christian author recommends. You had better have more than uneducated opinions when parents

## ***4. Can be used as a tool for evaluation of programs activities, the total ministry***

What is the primary purpose of your youth ministry? That was the question Dann Spader asked each of us youth pastors in the class. I was amazed to see my colleagues be able to spout off a single phrase that encapsulated the whole direction

of their groups. When you know what is crucial to you in ministry and you are able to communicate that to others in a way that they can understand, then every one can begin to evaluate every aspect of the ministry by that standard. It is a kind of measuring stick that allows you to see if your program or your latest event measures up. So when all your adult leaders want to run a fashion show you can ask "How does this help us achieve our goal or "reaching and discipling teen?" I know a group that lives by a standard they call "Holiness that hurts the eyes!" likely some of their activities would be evaluated in light of this statement. When there is a thoughtful philosophy of ministry in place, it is possible to see how each of these events will effect the overall vision.

### ***5. It answers important questions like:***

- How will I know if I am "successful"
- How will I explain my approach to parents and church leaders
- How will I respond to other ministries
- Why am I doing what I am doing?

## **Crafting Your Philosophy of Youth Ministry**

In a very real sense, your philosophy of ministry is a very personal thing. It is a combination of what you believe about the bible, discipleship, and youth. It should not be so personal that it ignores the actual group that you are working with. Yet it has to be true to what you believe in. For example, if mentoring has shaped who you are as a person, it is likely that it will figure highly in your philosophy of ministry.

As you read purpose driven youth ministry you will see that Fields has come to terms with a definite philosophy of ministry. It is clear what he believes is both Biblical and effective. Part of what you are saying in your philosophy is "What does it take to run an effective youth ministry, What works? "What do I believe the Bible teaches is essential in a youth ministry? Your philosophy needs to address questions like: how will we reach the lost, how will we nurture the Christians?, how do we develop leaders, what should we do when we come together? What are the priorities, the non-negotiables in youth ministry?

Once you have determined your priorities write them down in any order. Make a list of what is really important. Now you will want to add some kind of structure to it so that others can understand it. Fields has a baseball diamond, plus six essential purposes. This provides a structure to the philosophy for him and for those he wants to share it with. If you search the internet you will notice that other groups present their philosophy in other ways.

## **Sample Philosophy of Youth Ministry.**

### **Theological Framework:**

The incarnation is the model for youth ministry.

Youth Ministry is Family Oriented

Youth Ministry is a ministry of Modeling;

Youth Ministry is a ministry of reconciliation:



Youth Ministry recognizes the different Spiritual States,  
Youth Ministry exists for the purpose of completing the great commission and the great commandment --

**Philosophical Framework:**

Youth Ministry is developmental.  
Youth Ministry is Holistic.  
Youth Ministry is Cross Cultural Ministry:  
Youth Ministry is Cause Oriented  
Youth Ministry Recognizes Diversity:

**Strategy:**

Carefully evaluate the present situation:  
Cast a vision for the youth ministry  
Prepare the right environment for growth.  
Train Leaders (youth and committed adults who can relate to youth) who desire more  
Create Multiple Avenues for Entrance into the Youth Group:  
Institute a Program of One-on-One Discipleship  
Work directly with parents of teens  
Create opportunities for involvement  
Program for opportunities for extended times together and spiritual retreats.  
Establish nurture groups:

## **Philosophy of Youth Ministry.**

### **-Theological Framework:**

#### ***The incarnation is the model for youth ministry.***

Christ enters our world and through personal encounter calls us to follow him. We enter the world of youth through relationship and call youth to follow Christ. (In the incarnation Christ takes on the role of a servant. He does not compromise his standards, or abdicate his authority. So although he does not condemn the world he does not condone worldliness in his attempts to reach the lost.)

#### ***Youth Ministry is Family Oriented***

Deuteronomy 6 places the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the parents to train their children in the faith. The home was the center for passing on traditions, values, and the content of the faith. Effective youth ministries emphasize that faith begins in the home and places responsibility on the parents to disciple their children. It also equips parents to disciple their teens.

#### ***-Youth Ministry is a ministry of Modeling;***

The Youth Pastor must model what he teaches. Hypocrisy in leadership is the number one turn off to youth-they have little patience in this area. "Your effectiveness in ministry can be measured by your ability to communicate love" - Dann Spader -Sonlife Ministries. The youth Pastor must have a dynamic relationship with Jesus, be filled with the Holy Spirit and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. More will be taught by the pastor's treatment of the youth, attitude toward authority, ethics in relationships, and conversation than by the sermons or Bible studies he or she prepares. In trying to relate to youth the youth pastor does not compromise his identity, maturity, or attitudes toward authority. Trying to fit in by being foolish, anti-establishment, not acting your age or showing a love for the things of the world provides the youth with a negative role model. (Personal growth and preparation for youth ministry is a must. You can not pretend to be the kind of Christian you want the youth to be. Although no one even comes near being perfect, the youth pastor should have a lifestyle and relationship with Jesus that is worthy of being followed. In this way the youth pastor can say like Paul "Follow me as I follow Christ." If we are not in a place in our life where we can say this maybe it is better to spend more time growing first.)

The role of the youth pastor is to build relationships, earn trust of the parents and the youth, and to equip youth to do the work of the ministry.(Eph. 4:11-13)

### ***- Youth Ministry is a ministry of reconciliation:***

Alienation from God, adults, authority figures, even from other youth from other subcultures is a condition that the youth pastor attempts to change. Some youth ministries inadvertently depend the rifts between groups, making the situation worse. The youth pastor works as an advocate and mediator building bridges between youth and adults and vice versa.

The youth pastor must preach the same gospel that Christ preached, and that Paul preached -it is as difficult for youth to enter the kingdom of heaven as the rich young ruler -but all is possible with God. (Being contemporary never means compromise the cost of discipleship is always death.) (Deitrich Bonhoeffer)

-Christ calls teens to discipleship and expects equal or greater commitment than teens today put into their sports, their studies, or their relationships. (Teens are capable of intense commitment. The church must expect these high levels of devotion to Jesus. Youth will only live up to the expectations of those who teach them. Low expectations yield low results)

### ***- Youth Ministry recognizes the different Spiritual States,***

levels of commitment and gifts of youth. In the same ways there were the crowds, the 72, the 12, and the 3, teens have different levels of desire for Christ and must be challenged to higher levels of commitment but ministered to in a way that relates to their level of interest. E.G. the disinterested youth who comes to church because his parents force him, compared to the highly motivated youth who wants to be trained to witness to friends despite persecution from unsaved parents.) Fields describes these levels in terms of commitment. The least committed are the community, then there are the crowds. Those who attend the programs are the congregation. Those who are bent of discipleship are the committed and those who minister and lead are the core.

## ***Youth Ministry exists for the purpose of completing the great commission and the great commandment --***

The youth group is a means to an end and not an end in itself. As each Christian lives for Christ and for others, the youth group exists for Christ's purposes and for others.

## **Philosophical Framework:**

### ***- Youth Ministry is developmental.***

It takes into consideration the developmental stages youth are experiencing. It also takes into account the process of faith development, and emotional maturity that youth are experiencing. (Therefore in counseling youth, not every one of their problems is primarily a spiritual problem.)

### ***- Youth Ministry is Holistic.***

It takes into consideration all the needs of youth, physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, and spiritual. Our programming must address all of these aspects of their lives.

### ***- Youth Ministry is Cross Cultural Ministry:***

If missionaries require training to penetrate a foreign culture and develop indigenous ministries then youth deserve the same respect. Society is changing rapidly. Paradigms shift at an increasing rate. The result is a greater distance between the generations than in the past. To remain relevant, youth ministers must develop ministries that use the best of missiological principles and strategies or just be content to work with the youth who have been enculturated into the Christian subculture through their upbringing. (This will result in a strategy that says. ' we are only concerned with holding on to the ones we have -not those who are unchurched.')

### ***- Youth Ministry is Cause Oriented***

Youth are motivated by causes. We lose our most capable youth by catering to those who only want to be entertained. Youth will commit themselves to causes that they believe in. Youth groups that are not involved or lack vision, will not inspire youth. "We lose kids not because we make serving Jesus too difficult but because we make it too easy." (Campolo) Teens don't feel as great a need to read the Bible or pray if they are not actively involved in a ministry that demands prayer and sharing the word.

### ***- Youth Ministry Recognizes Diversity:***

There is no such thing as a single youth culture. Youth segregate themselves by their music interest (grunge, hip hop, reggae rap, gansta rap, jazz fusion, heavy metal, acid rock...); their sports interests -skateboarders, the football team; or hobbies, video arcade, doing drugs, etc. There is no such thing as a 'typical' youth. The challenge to youth ministry is to learn how to reach and disciple ever different segment of youth population in the same way that Jesus was able to minister to zealots, fisherman, outcasts, and intellectuals. Our outreach efforts cannot only be to one type of youth that we feel comfortable around.

## **Strategy:**

### ***-Carefully evaluate the present situation:***

Pre-packaged programs, ideal ministry models, what is working a thousand miles away will never work in your context. A long, detailed process of evaluation, "understanding the story" (Leith Anderson) as told by those who know it is essential. This evaluation entails every aspect of the church and the community.

### ***-Cast a vision for the youth ministry***

Wait upon God. Consult with the senior pastor. Search the word of God. Fast and pray. Recognise your strengths as a leader, be true to your philosophy of ministry, respond to the pressing needs of the group with direction that you can share with the leadership of the church, the youth ministry, and the community. Vision must translate into workable programs and goals.

### ***-Prepare the right environment for growth.***

All outreach efforts will be useless if the youth group is a dysfunctional, closed, apathetic group. New members will only be abused and rejected in such a group. Objectives should be: to get love flowing in the group (try monthly home meetings, group outings, sharing times -see Denny Rydbergs's, Building Community in Youth Groups for a effective process), develop an identity for the group, inspire the youth to own the vision God has given you. (When teens are excited about inviting their friends to the youth events, the image, identity, and ownership problems have likely been addressed.) Correct any wrong concepts youth may have concerning grace, discipleship, and the word of God. Lay ground rules for expected behaviour. (The atmosphere in many youth groups is destroyed because of lack of discipline by the leader. Some times youth workers try to relate by acting like teenagers. This is a serious mistake. The Youth Pastor is not a big kid.) Improve the reputation of the youth group among the youth of the community. Make positive connections with church members, community leaders, and youth (e.g. involvement in the High School or other community agencies.) In-reach must also take place. That is reaching the kids who have grown up in the church since childhood but at some point have stopped growing and resist Christ's call to follow.

### ***-Train Leaders (youth and committed adults who can relate to youth) who desire more***

of God and desire to be effective in peer ministry and reaching their unsaved friends. ( I oppose the idea of an elected group of youth executives. This is a worldly business model and has no place in the Body of Christ.) Leadership is based on their desire to serve and evidence of having shown themselves to be responsible, available, faithful and teachable when volunteering in areas of the ministry. (When selecting leaders I normally select those who are willing to pray with me one hour a week before the service.) Leaders serve the youth and minister to others rather than just doing planning or setting up chairs etc. (Volunteers and other youth with lower levels of commitment often enjoy these tasks if proper recognition is given and they understand the purpose of the task)

### ***-Create Multiple Avenues for Entrance into the Youth Group:***

A regular large event (once a month) will attract certain kinds of kids who like the type of activity your run or the music you play. That is only one way to meet and reach the friends of teens in your group. An afternoon drop in program at the church, or a high school Bible study is another way. Tutoring programs, for struggling teens,

may also be another avenue. Teens can be trained to do video outreaches in their homes. Monthly home fellowship meetings may also draw different kinds of kids as well as improving the atmosphere in the group. Support groups may work for some kinds of kids. Service projects can also enlist the help of non-Christian teens: many will help visit seniors, volunteer with the youth at a food bank, help out in a coat drive, or even a car wash or a starve a thon to raise money for the poor, clean seniors homes, act in a play help build a church or a run a play day for children. Church sport teams may also draw athletic kids who aren't already on city leagues. By finding needs in the community and designing ministries to meet these needs can be an extremely effective form of evangelism. If the Christian youth run these ministries they will grow stronger in their faith.

### ***-Institute a Program of One-on-One Discipleship***

A program of peer and pastoral discipleship should be organized to disciple new converts and teens with special needs. This will prevent youth from slipping through the cracks in the youth program. (I have used this with kids who were older, were having conflicts with the youth group, overcoming an addiction, etc..) One program that has been successful in this area has been -Onward Bound -by Duffy Robbins in Programming to Make disciples.

### ***-Work directly with parents of teens***

God's desire and design was that discipleship begin in the home (cf. Deuteronomy chapter 6) The influence of parents upon the spiritual nurture of their children will exceed by far the influence of the youth pastor. (Mark Senter III) Good youth ministry means building strong godly families. Too often youth ministries function as an alternative to families or in direct opposition to them. Helping parents in their role may be the best thing youth ministers can do to achieve lasting fruit in the ministry.

### ***-Create opportunities for involvement***

maximum involvement equals maximum growth. Short term mission trips, drama teams, outreach projects, and other areas of service by youth have long been billed as the most transforming experiences for teens. Jesus had the disciples directly involved in his ministry. The reason: learn by doing. Without fail the student in my ministry who are still growing today over ten years later, are the ones who became involved in outreach, inreach and service to others.

### ***-Establish a presence in the high schools and junior highs or middle schools.***

I continue to contend that if a teen is not a Christian at school that teen is not a Christian at all. By supporting the local high school Christian group, or starting a program if there is none the youth worker models the kind of involvement expected from the youth group members. Opportunities for meeting teens, and increasing the relevance of the youth ministry abound on campus.

### ***-Program for opportunities for extended times together and spiritual retreats.***

In a recent Group Magazine survey of 1000 Christian teens it was determined that retreats and camps were more effective than anything youth ministries did to reach or nurture spiritual growth in teens. Although they require planning money and many hours of work for the youth worker, retreats are more effective than youth talks or Bible studies and are therefore worth the outlay of effort.

### ***-Establish nurture groups:***

As the group gets larger it must get smaller. In other words teens always need to feel like if they do not attend they will be missed. Local nurture groups meeting in homes accomplish a number of very important objectives: there is sense of belonging and connectedness, there is a sense of ownership, there is attention given to the particular needs of the individuals, there is opportunity for interaction with volunteers and peer leaders, and all of the members of the body can contribute.

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## **Chapter 2 One-to-One Ministry**

### **Introduction**

Think for one minute. What are the five messages that have changed your life the most. Stop! How many came to mind, 2, 3? Now try to think of five people who have impacted your life in a significant way. You had all five, right?

God has chosen to communicate his Word through the Bible, but he has used us to share the life of Christ. Paul told one of the churches that he founded that he shared not just the word but his very life with them. Who has been a significant person in your spiritual development. That is the kind of person that I want to challenge you to be. As you will see in chapter one of Purpose Driven Youth Ministry, the quality of ministry that will come from your life is the same as the quality of your relationship with the master. No student is greater than their master. You cannot lead your students where you have not been yourself.

### **One-to-One Discipleship**

One of the big buzz words among evangelicals these days is mentoring. By 'mentoring' what is meant, is that you find a caring person who will challenge you to grow in areas of your life. There is an element of coaching involved as that person helps you to set goals then keeps you accountable to reaching those goals. Probably the best treatment of this subject for youth was done years ago in a now out of print book called "Programming to Make Disciples" by Duffy Robbins. This book has proved to be seminal in the thinking of youth pastors in North America.

Chapter 5 describes the process of fine tuning. Robbins contends that there are teens who need that special personal attention to grow in areas of their lives that the usual large group or even small group programming will not touch. This has been the secret of navigators ministries for years. In *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, Leroy

Eims does a masterful treatment of the subject of one on one discipleship. Whenever you get the opportunity buy and read this book.

## **Why One on One Discipleship.**

It may not seem time efficient or the best allocation of your human resources but there are a number of individuals who would greatly benefit by providing opportunities for one on one discipleship.

## **Teens Out of Step with the Group**

Zack (not his real name) ran away from his Christian home and lived on the streets for a year. When he returned to God, the church and his parents, he had experienced a slice of life that was so totally foreign to the other kids in my group that his questions in Bible study make heads spin a full 360 degrees. We began to meet each week and debrief his year on the road in the light of the gospel. In me he found acceptance and understanding that he would not have found in our group setting. At the same time, when he was at the group the need to "share" was not as great. The group study was beneficial for everyone once again and did not have to focus on his particular needs every week.

## **Teens Who are Hungry for More**

"Ron can you teach me to Pray" Tommy asked me after one of our Sunday School classes. When I came to, Tommy went on to tell me that he wanted to get results when he prayed instead of just praying because he was supposed to. The focus of our discipleship was very specific. He read a book called "Too Busy Not to Pray" by Bill Hybels and we discussed a chapter a week. Tommy also began to list his prayer requests and report to me which were answered. Lastly we spent a portion of each or times together praying. We both grew in the area of prayer. There are moments of "learning readiness" or what some authors call "teachable moments" they do not happen at the same time in each students life. Creating these kinds of opportunities for teens can allow them to have the kind of growth spurts that normal physical development in so dependent upon. The hunger that teens have can be fleeting if they are not recognized and fed.

In a small youth group it is likely that most of the teens are at a different level of spiritual maturity. In that case you will need to develop a leadership training program that targets individuals. You may find a student who wants to serve the group and reach out to the lost. Your weekly bible study will not provide the necessary training for that young person. If you want to have student leaders you may have to train them one at a time. The goal of this kind of discipleship is training for ministry. You want to challenge these teens to serve and equip them so that when they try to serve they are able to do it.

Sue was one such student. She had a profound burden for her high school. They used to be a Christian Club there but because of a lack of leadership it had shut down. We prayed about this often but we both began to realize that God could be calling her to lead the group even though she was only in grade nine. I drove out to the high school once a month and planned the meetings with her each week until she was able to

plan the meetings on her own. In time she was training her friends to lead the meetings, and spending time with students who were weak in their faith.

It could be that you will have to build your student leadership team one student at a time.

## **Teens with Social Problems**

Socio-path, freak, psycho, loser, spazz –those are just a few of the names Troy was used to when he came to our group. Sadly I had no time for him. He was disruptive, in every group setting. He was suspended twice from our JUNIOR High program. All of our leaders patience was worn thin. But like an answer to prayer John got a burden for this young guy. In a one on one setting his attention deficit disorder was less of a problem than in the group. He was getting the attention he was seeking and did not have to seek it on Wednesday night. What a breakthrough! Who knows could we have prevented what happened in Columbine and Taber? Troy has not only met Christ now, but he is the one of the good ones in our group (don't ask me about the others!!) Often I hear leaders say "ignore him, he is just looking for attention" My theory is that if we give kids attention before they seek it through disruptive or antisocial behavior we have prevented difficulties and gained a friend instead of an enemy. One on one relationships provide opportunities to give the attention necessary to needy teens.

## **New Believers**

I don't know many small youth groups that run a new believers cell group. What would happen if someone were to actually come to Christ at one of the meetings. If we believe that one-size-fits-all we risk damaging the spiritual development of a new believer. Most discipleship programs out there assume that the believer is new to the Christian faith. I think that we also need to follow-up kids who make commitments at camps or retreats, rededicating themselves to live the Christian life. When the light finally goes off in the head of that kid who grew up in the church it would be great to have someone come alongside to build the proper foundation and help them to avoid returning to the exact lifestyle and habits that they had developed over the years. Maybe one of the best objectives of that kind of a discipleship relationship is to unlearn the bad habits that were picked up over the years of apathy or rebellion.

On the other hand, we have to recognize that kids coming into the church from the community who are pretty much unchurched have less of an understanding of Christianity than any other generation in North American history. In fact on the second day of a retreat last year one of the students asked me during a small group devotion time "Ron, all weekend you have been telling us that Jesus died for us. How did Jesus die?" I don't take anything for granted any more. We live in a post-Christian society. One way to think about it is that neither the parents or the kids have been to Sunday School. A one on one discipleship program will bring a teen up to speed a lot faster than trying to put the pieces together from your regular large group meetings.

## **Special Needs Youth**

It was my first week at my second church. There were 9 students present for the Bible study. Two were university students, two were just learning English, four came with me in the van from my neighbourhood, and then there was John! "Pastor I had a



dream that I met angels and they took me to the amusement park and told me that the happy people were going to go to heaven and the sad ones were going to go to hell..." Every week my lesson was punctuated by John's fantastic dreams. Everyone was watching to see if I would treat John the way the rest of society does. He was 17 and functioned at the level of a ten year old. I consulted with John's social worker and with his parents. John and I met every two weeks and talked on the phone every week. John was able to tell me his stories somewhere else. As soon as our times together began the interruptions ended.

The two students who had very little English had other needs. Although they wanted to know God they were bored in our group meetings because they were too frightened to contribute in their broken English. Instead of putting them under pressure I gave them a typed out copy of my lesson notes that they could follow. Each week I called them for a half hour and went over the lesson with them. I would have loved to have an assistant to do this for them. In a year their English had improved to a point that none of this was necessary.

The two university students had other needs. Facing doubts and rethinking the meaning of organized religion, each week the lesson provided fodder for deeper discussion which we did over at the coffee shop when everyone was gone. Here they could raise their criticisms of the church and the Bible without shattering the faith of the younger teens, or the nerves of the young pastor!

## **Teens Overcoming Addictions**

There is certainly a big difference between a twelve step program and a discipling relationship, but there are also some similarities. Both involve learning, accountability, setting goals and trust in a higher power. When one of my student leaders confessed to me that he could not sleep at night without a drink I chose to be his accountability partner. We studied the roots of addiction and focused on goals together. We memorized scripture together and prayed together. For a time it was every night over the phone at his bed time. This was scaled back to once a week, then once a month. Discipleship programs have helped other teens who have struggled with pornography, sexual immorality, shop lifting, and addiction to slasher movies. The goal of the growth is to replace immediate gratification that comes with these things with a healthy desire for God, fellowship, and his word.

## **Teens Struggling with Difficulties**

The beauty of a one-on-one program is that it is tailored to the needs of the young person. Jane was able to help Sarah with her friendlessness through a study of Proverbs and a book called the Friendship Factor. Mark was placed on a six month waiting list for counseling despite his first suicide attempt. Although counseling suicidal teens was out of my league the counselor recommended a process of support through weekly meetings and compassionate listening. She also suggested that because faith was such a big part of Mark's life that we should include Bible readings and set some goals for meantime before he could receive counseling. During that time, there were serious bouts of depression and anxiety but he had someone to talk to now and we had established some godly coping strategies during our times

together. By the time the counselor could see Mark he was a much more stable person.

The line between discipleship and counseling can get blurred if you are not careful. Please recognize that counseling requires years of training. Don't try to play personal psychiatrist. At the same time, a caring mentor can be an excellent support person to someone who is experiencing the loss of a loved one, family difficulties or divorce, relocation to a new area, problems with self esteem, or stress.

## Grads in the Fast Track

Duffy Robbins describes a disease that strikes students in their final year of high school called Senioritis. The result of the disease is a kind of malaise that keeps them from being at your meetings. Attendance drops off because the group is something from their past and at this point they are future oriented. They are also busy, either they are up to their eyebrows in work, or they are chasing after scholarships, university applications, or just emotionally disconnected from youth ministry. If there is a genuine desire for God and the excuses for not being at the group are real, either a small group for grads, or a tailored one-on-one discipleship situation may be the answer. A discipling relationship is flexible and can fit their schedule. It can have as its objectives issues that the senior is working through, preparation for college or university, apologetics, or just a supplement for their spiritual growth. (If you have looked at attrition rates for youth groups, that alone would suggest that we had better pay particular attention to this group.)

So basically every youth could benefit in some way from a discipling relationship. In the same way that athletes and movie stars have personal trainers even leaders or leaders can benefit from a capable mentor who will keep us accountable and challenge us upward toward excellence.

## Getting Started in One-to-One Discipleship

Often teens in one of the groups mentioned above would come to me to ask for extra help. Other times parents have asked for extra help with their teen. Sometimes I have promoted the program and had kids approach me after ward explaining that they would like extra help in their spiritual development.

Building the discipling relationship is the first order of business. If you do not trust each other you are off to bad start. Most of the time I am working with a student and that means that it is not really a two way street. We may discuss the same materials but it is clear that I am there to help them grow and not so much the other way. I definitely do grow through the process but not in the same way as the student.

Duffy Robbins explains it this way:

*We used a three phase strategy with each youth who signed on. Phase one involved evaluation. The first step was to help each student explore and consider areas in which they needed to grow. This was done using three sources of input, the Taylor Johnson temperament analysis, parental evaluation form, and personal interview. After all the information was*

*gathered, a growth contract was drawn up. This growth contract involved at least four categories of focus: Scripture (involving some element of bible study or memorization, reading (short book or articles), life (some kind of assignment that had to do with actually putting their growth goals into some observable behavior - log, journal) sharing (where students could share what they were learning either with a growth partner or a small group) The Third Phase was accountability --each student met with one of the the ministry team members semiweekly these growth partners were responsible for seeing that each student was making progress in his or her contract and even more so helping students to reflect on what they were learning through tier various assignments. The accountability was key to the success of the program. (from Programming to Build Disciples Victor Books, 1987)*

## **The Initial Meeting**

At the first meeting it is most important to develop trust. The student needs to be completely comfortable with you if he or she is to begin to open up to you. This can be established by having more of an informal meeting. Going for a coke or a coffee and going over the growth contract would be a good start. If there are areas of the growth contract that are not complete these could be worked on. If a growth contract is not being used then this meeting is more of a fact finding mission to develop some goals and objectives for your time together. Although some young people will benefit from just an informal time together to hang out, discipleship is more than this. I have found that little progress is made without goal setting and accountability. AT the end to of the first meeting it is good to have established a regular time and place that you will meet and your expectations of the discipling relationship.

## **Week to Week**

From week to week there should be greater trust and progress toward the goals. Sometimes if the times together are not meaningful or profitable to the young person you will find that attendance drops off. Young people are not always good at informing you that they will be late, will not show up or afterward, that they forgot about the meeting entirely. Having the parents involved in the process can help out. There are times when a meeting to reevaluate the progress may be necessary. This may follow a week where the student has been absent or around the midpoint if you are not convinced that real progress is taking place. It is essential to be consistent in prayer for your discipleship partner.

## **Moving ON**

Discipleship programs, group or individual should never be open ended. You may decide to renew the discipleship contract and go for another 13 weeks but more likely it is best to take a break after ward. Part of the danger is that an unhealthy relationship of dependency can be developed and rather than helping the young person stand on their own two feet you have crippled their spiritual development. The better that you have made the conditions of the program clear from the start the easier it will be to stop meeting together at the end of the allotted time.

## **Sample Contract:**

Here is a sample growth contract that you can use:

Growth Contract
<p>I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:10-14</p>
<p>Please complete this contract carefully, prayerfully, and completely. This is a covenant, a contract, a promise that to the best of your ability and with Gods help and you will complete the contract below. this contract is based on areas of growth that you have pinpointed for special concentration. Be willing to push yourself Your growth partner is taking valuable time to meet with you each week. Make those meetings count. This is the key to getting the most out of this arrangement.</p>
<p>I _____ in an effort to press toward the mark do solemnly commit myself with God's help to grow in the following areas of my life. I understand that I will be held accountable for these goals and that my contract to grow in these areas is not to be taken lightly.</p>
<p>In consultation with your growth partner please carefully design three goals that are:</p>
<p><b>measurable:</b> you will know for sure when you reach them (specific not general)</p>
<p><b>achievable:</b> there are goals that can be reached in the short 10 week period</p>
<p><b>dated:</b> it is clear when these changes will have happened by (in this case 10 weeks)</p>
<p>Goal one: _____</p>
<p>_____</p>
<p>Goal two: _____</p>
<p>_____</p>
<p>Goal three: _____</p>
<p>_____</p>
<p>It is my responsibility to meet with my growth partner to meet at the following time and place each week:</p>
<p>This contract is to be finished by _____</p>
<p>To make progress toward these goals I have stated I will work in the following growth areas:</p>
<p><b>Scripture:</b> outline your devotional schedule for the next 10 weeks. Choose passages or books that relate in some ways to your goals.</p>

<b>Practice:</b> what changes in your behaviour or attitude or schedule will you make and how will you record it (eg. I will keep a log of when I argue with any one so that I will begin to get to control of my tongue in the next ten weeks)
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<b>Reading:</b> in this case you will read one chapter a week from a book that will help you toward your goals.
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<b>Sharing:</b> Total openness with accountability partner is required. If you want you can share your progress with your small group or with others
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# Part Two Youth Ministry Management

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## Chapter 3 Unbalanced Approaches to Youth Ministry

### Introduction

The most natural reaction to leading a youth ministry is to model your ministry after one that you have experienced despite what you have learned in college. The known is much more predictable than the unknown and theory, while it may sound convincing in a lecture or a text book is just a theory until you have seen it in practice. The danger of discarding all that you have been taught from the experts in the text and going with what you are familiar with is that much of the ministry that has been practiced in previous decades was not always consistent with the best youth ministry practices. In fact, with youth ministry majors being a recent addition to most school's curriculum many of the pastors leading youth ministries in previous generations were applying general ministry principles or patterned their ministry after what they experienced as a youth. The result has been some interesting variations that overemphasize a particular approach sometime at the expense of other important truths.

### Unbalanced Approaches to Youth Ministry

Listed below are six unbalanced approaches that this author has been able to observe over the past 20 years of youth ministry. Each one of these is a caricature in that it is an exaggeration of the characteristics that make it ineffective. Although some aspects may seem exaggerated and you may feel that "no ministry could be that bad," or that

“no youth leader could be that misguided,” you may be surprised to see elements of these approaches in ministries in your area.

## The Baby Sitting Approach

**Assumptions: kids are kids** –This ministry is called baby sitting because it provides a safe place for kids to have food, fun, and fellowship but there is no pressure on the youth or the leader to see spiritual maturity develop in the youth. One leader running a program like this admitted, “The kids are off the street, not doing drugs, or sleeping around. What more can you ask for?”

**Program: fun and games** –In this context entertaining the youth so that they will continue to attend is important. The important thing is that teens keep coming back week after week. This keeps the youth and the parents happy, or at least that is the assumption.

**Motto: Are we having fun yet!** If this group had a motto this would be it. This kind of ministry seems to try to prove that “just because we are Christians does not mean that we cannot have fun!”

**Goal: keep them in church, provide alternative to the world.** There is nothing wrong with wanting to attract youth to a program and to offer healthy safe alternatives to some of the risk taking behaviours available to youth. The weakness of this approach is that many youth are looking for more than what they can find at the community center, high school clubs or the YMCA.

**Source: music, entertainment, sports** –What is meant by *source* is where does the inspiration come from for this ministry? Babysitting leaders are looking for the next great game or event that they can pull off to attract new kids and entertain the kids who have been coming out.

**Expectations: low** –Each of these unbalanced approaches has an unwritten expectation. The Baby sitting approach has low expectations of teens. It expects that kids just want to have fun and that the best that can be done is to keep them safe and let them wait out their adolescence until they get serious about life and God. In an interview with Sproule a noted Christian author and leader, he said. “You can’t expect a 16 year old to make a serious commitment!” Sadly there are even those who work with youth who have such low expectations.

**Results: low** –The law of expectation in psychology states that students will live up to (or down to) the expectations held by those around them. If a youth ministry expects youth to just want to play and treats them that way that is how they will respond. The Babysitting approach will repulse students who are anxious to impact the world with the gospel. Likely these youth will be found volunteering in the nursery or teaching a Sunday school class. Sadly Campolo is correct in saying that, “We lose our best students not because we make Christianity too hard, but because we make it too easy.”

## The Task Master Approach

**Assumptions: teens are sinful wicked and lost** –There is a good theological reason to believe that humanity is degenerate before it is regenerated! Total depravity, as Calvin proposed seems very evident in youth culture sometimes. While youth are created in the image of God this image has been warped demented and perverted by sin. This view becomes more complicated in the church where the majority of teens

will have made a childhood commitment to Christ. Should we continue to hold such a view if they are part of the family of faith but the fruit of their lives shows very little maturity or even evidence of regeneration?

**Motto: Turn or Burn** –The emphasis of the youth workers who see themselves as Fire and Brimstone preachers is on repentance. They have no times for frivolity and foolishness. As one youth worker complained, “We will have plenty of time for fun when all of these kids are serving God. Until then we have work to do!”

**Program: Revival meeting.** In the mind of the taskmaster there is no point in icebreakers, ski trips and banana split parties. To them all of this is foolishness that distracts from the need to convert youth. To be fair to them they have a passion to see the lost saved and feel that fun and games confuse the urgency of the task. They feel that fun and games or even using popular media only confuses youth who should be ready to deny themselves all these things take up their crosses and get in line behind Jesus. The kind of meetings that they will conduct for you will normally be patterned after an evangelistic service. This may include, worship and altar call or some kind of decision. The preaching against lust of flesh because in this approach there can be no salvation without sinners, not saving without drowning, no finding without being lost, and no sight for those who think that they can see. The preaching will also emphasize separation from the world and the things of the world. Part of the call to salvation will be, “Come out from among them and be ye separate,” and yes it may even be from the King James bible. The special events for these kinds of ministries will include rallies and crusades, spiritual retreat, or evangelistic events. One church that feel very strongly about this approach has become famous for its Hell House at Halloween that demonstrates dramatically some of the horrors of our contemporary society and the torments of hell. At the end of the tour through the hell house visitors are challenged to make an immediate and complete surrender to Jesus Christ. Those who do exit to a prayer area through one door and others who choose not take their fate in their own hands and exit through another door.

**Goal: get these kids saved** –repentance and obedience. The focus of such a ministry is very sharp and measurable. Effectiveness is measured in commitments made to Christ each year. At the same time all the members are expected to live a holy life and to be active witnesses at their schools.

**Source: Word of God and the Traditions of men.** Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their neglect of weightier matters of the law and their obsession with ritualistic purity. They emphasized the outward and ignored the depravity in their own hearts. They allowed the traditions of men to take precedence over Scripture. These ministries sometimes descend into this kind of legalism.

**Expectations: low** –This may seem like a surprise that the expectation is low when these preachers desire to see each and every youth accept Jesus as Lord and savior. The problem with this approach is that the goal of salvations logged, falls short of the Lord’s desire to see teens grow toward maturity. In this kind of a system the student who is saved has arrived. Sadly salvation is the beginning of discipleship, not the end. Students in this kind of ministry will not get attention again unless they get in trouble and have to recommit their lives to Christ.

**Results: low guilt,** legalistic devotion and backsliding. Sadly preaching about the lusts of the flesh and talking about why kids need a savior does not build up teens. In fact this orientation to the gospel emphasized law not grace and even Christian students are left feeling inadequate or assume that they need to work hard to “stay saved.” Those who are unable to keep up or are unable to kick a habit like smoking or masturbation are overwhelmed with guilt and anxiety over their eternal destiny.

## The Guru Approach

**Assumptions: all truth lies within** –This is less likely to be found in Evangelical churches but it still does exist. In direct opposition to the idea that kids are lost this one assumes that in each youth there is a divine spark and that because they were born into the family of faith they need to recognize the position that they already have in Christ.

**Motto: Know thy self** –If at the core of each child the holy spirit is already resident he will lead them into all truth. This kind of ministry is not new age assuming that the teens are gods, but it does mean that they need to look deep within for inside are the well springs of life. It is interesting to note that it was Socrates that said know thyself but Jesus said, Deny thyself. Later Shakespeare taught that people should be “true to thyself” (More recently the Beach Boys said, “Be true to your school...” but this is tangential to our subject.) The point is that knowing ourselves in a Greek Philosophical concept and not a Christian teaching.

**Program: self discovery, values clarification, discussion.** Since at the center of each youth is that perfect self what is required is taking that inner journey to the center of their being. Students in this type of contemplative ministry seek to get in touch with Jesus in them.

**Goal: students find themselves.** Since all truth is already resident inside, the goal for students is to get in touch or to find themselves. This activity appeals to narcissistic youth who make the whole of Christianity about their personal experience. College age student for decades have been encouraged to find themselves rather than to deny themselves.

**Source: kids are the authority on themselves-** In Canada, when girls ask their mothers the question, “Mom, when am going to marry someone how will I know if I love them? At this point most Canadian mothers will respond, “When you are in love..... *you will know.*” This kind of subjective personal approach is the same that operates in the guru style ministry. The spiritual leader helps students, not by exegeting passages of scripture but by helping them know their heart. The danger here is that the heart is easily swayed. As Warren Wiersbe advises,  
*feelings come and feelings go  
and feelings are deceiving  
trust alone the word of God  
nothing else is worth believing*

**Expectations: wrong because they are unbiblical.** For this style of ministry it is difficult to measure high or low for expectations because they are just wrong. The self discovery game can be a dangerous game for after going deep inside student may realize that there is not a divine presence but emptiness. For these young people they need to be born again and allow the Lord to come and fill the vacuum inside. Without Christ the inward journey is a journey toward despair.

**Results:** wrong because it puts youth above the word. The other danger with the guru approach is that the human heart becomes the arbiter of truth. This is the road to moral relativism and is reminiscent of the approach taken in the time of the book of Judges that describes a time when “there was no king in the Land and every one did as they saw fit.

## The Counselor Approach

**Assumptions:** kids are messed up. From a psycho-social perspective it may appear that youth need a life coach to survive the trauma of adolescence. Given the challenges of youth culture a ministry can seek greater well being of the students. In



this mind set the youth ministry helps students become properly adjusted instead of maladjusted.

**Motto: You are special.** Since so much of at risk behavior is tied to a poor self concept this type of ministry will do all it can to help teens develop a positive consistent self concept. Helping students develop positive self esteem in the context of the church or a para-church ministry is essence. Each student is to be affirmed. Instead of being told that they are a dirty rotten sinner students come to understand that God made each of them special.

**Program:** group therapy, personal interviews discuss self esteem and pop psychology. While the Bible does discuss our special status in Christ, the counselor type ministry is not inspired by scripture as much as it motivated by either a twelve step program or other material for group recovery and support. While this does have a place in the church, Jesus called his disciples to service not self help.

**Goal: help them cope, -straighten them out** -Develop well adjusted young people. The goals are definitely in agreement with much of what should happen in a good youth ministry. Students should be able to cope. They should begin to find their lives straightening out and their should be a measure of mental health. The goal of coping is not what the scripture promises believers. God calls us not just to wholeness but to service. Even then, wholeness is not a result of fellowship alone. It enhances our lives but it does not save them. Correctly understood, those who do not know Christ are not sick and needing to get well, they are dead in trespasses and sins and need to be raised to new life in Christ. Beyond that scripture has not called us to mere survival. We are offered full life! Paul says that we more than conqueror and that God always leads us in triumphal procession.

**Source: pop psychology.** This kind of ministry is informed more by psychology than by Scripture. This type of ministry may use different types of personality tests, spiritual gift tests and different affirmation exercises. It may even do everything possible to help students be free from guilt. The danger is that the Holy Spirit does convict people of sin and removing that guilt prematurely before the student is forgiven or has repented provides false assurance.

**Expectations: low** -In this context of ministry students are trained to be emotionally balanced and their highest goal is self actualization. The hope is that students would be able to cope. As mentioned above, Christ intends so much more for his followers. This goal is so far below the joy that is to be our strength

**Results: low--** If leaders are happy enough to see students “getting by” students will not be exposed to the joy of serving Jesus. If the group is all about helping each other cope and not about sharing full life in Christ students will be robbed of the experience of sharing their faith, serving others, or growing to maturity.

## The Eclectic Approach

**Assumptions: all of the above.** This is also called the “no approach, approach” The word eclectic can be a good thing in many circumstances but in this instance it is meant to refer to drawing from many sources. Sadly this type of ministry lacks direction because the direction is constantly changing. Having no clear purpose or direction these leaders shift focus whenever they hear of a new idea that someone else is using successfully.

**Motto: So...what are we gonna do tonight?!** Some novice youth workers think that it is a good idea to ask the students what they want to do this year. A good analogy would be a high school teacher asking the students in the class room what they would like to do this year. Asking this question does not instill confidence in the

students in either setting. The pastor should have a very clear idea of what will happen during the year. After that there is room for student input.

**Program: changes weekly-** Since there is not clear philosophy of youth ministry and no set plan the leader is free to change course mid way and the students are not aware of the change. They do sense however that there is a hit and miss approach to the program and they become less enthusiastic about new ideas since the idea will be dead in less than a month.

**Goal: no clear goals.** Since the leader is so open to new ideas and directions there are no clear goals. There may be some written goals that were devised at some point in time but now no one can even find the list.

**Source: what others are doing-** Probably the greatest influence on this kind of leader will be what other successful groups are doing. So if the youth pastor goes away to a conference the students can be fairly certain that the youth ministry is about to change again.

**Expectations: low** It has been said that if you aim at nothing you are sure to hit it. In this kind of ministry there are either no goals or no one is working toward them. It is not clear what the group is trying to accomplish and there is no way to measure if things are going well or not. For the youth in this program it is not clear what the youth worker expects of them. There can be a sense of guilt and disappointment because students are not excited about the youth ministry.

**Results: low.** Once again since leaders can not honestly expect anything from the members in the group the expectations and the results are very low. Long term results that last are the result of a good long term plan.

## The One Trick Pony Approach

**Assumptions: that there is only *one thing* that works with teens today-** If you examine the books on the shelves of the Christian bookstore about youth ministry it is unlikely these days that any author will claim that there is just one thing that works with youth, but after reading some of the books it seems that some are saying that it is one thing like perhaps worship that grows a youth ministry. Others will claim that the only thing that works is small groups. Others insist that the way to grow a ministry is flashy preaching, regular large events or big contests. The idea that there is only one thing that works today is a claim that leaders are buying into.

**Motto: Make the main thing the only thing** –The assumption that since there is only one thing that works, the youth ministry will put all their effort into that, whether it is campus ministry, worship, missions, small groups, drama or multi media presentations.

**Program: is identical each week.** Since there is a set formula for success it best to stick to the winning routine and not deviate from it. One youth leader confessed that he hired a worship leader for the youth program because he was certain that with her leading worship the youth ministry would just take off. Eventually it was the students who decided to *take off*

**Goal: one goal** –Since the goal is to perfect the formula for worship or small groups or contacting ministry or sports ministry there is a sense of purpose and direction. The danger of such “tunnel vision” is that other important aspects of ministry are completely ignored.

**Source: no need,**-- the recipe does not change. Leaders seeking to perfect some formula for a youth ministry do not want to be confused by other information or even needs that may arise. These are seen as a distractions and deterrents to the progress of the ministry.

**Expectations: high** These leaders expect instant unsurpassed growth. Normally they have in focus the success of the ministry and this is measured in numbers of students present. The expectation is high. Hopes are high. These leaders are excited about the possibility of visible growth.

**Results: low** Experience has shown that these one sided ministries are destined for failure since any unbalanced approach will soon begin to produce unbalanced believers.

## Conclusion

When we examine youth ministry approaches it becomes clear that we need to learn from the mistakes of others. Imbalance destroys a ministry quickly. Ministries that conscientiously seek to serve youth will be much further ahead in the long run. Leaders should pay close attention toward biases toward any of the unhealthy approaches discussed above. This chapter also underscores the importance of developing a Biblically balance philosophy of youth ministry and applying it to the church youth group or campus ministry/

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# Chapter 4 Vision, Goals and Programs

## Introduction

He sat at his clean desk on his first day of the church. A white sheet stared up at him from the desk, like the eye of a Cyclops. “Now what am I supposed to do?” he thought in a George-Costanza-ish moment. “I have all this training, done hundreds of hours of volunteer work. But now I am overwhelmed with the enormity of the task.” Mental paralysis sets in. Time to dust off the old philosophy of youth ministry and my description of a disciplined student.

There are so many variables. So much to consider when giving direction to a youth ministry but something needs to be done. It is one thing to have a philosophy of youth ministry and quite another to implement it. That is where vision, goals and programs come into play.

## Vision

God has a will for your group. Yes there is a general will, that it be a loving, encouraging group that is passionate about Jesus but there is a specific will for your group. In the book of Revelation Jesus evaluates 7 churches (Rev 1-3). For each Jesus points out their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential problems. Business ventures take a similar look at new proposals. Part of the vision process involves evaluation. Each group should be evaluated. What are the strengths? What are the weakness? What resources of time, money and volunteers are available. Part of the whole evaluation process also involves determining the levels of commitment

of your students. If there are no core or committed students you should probably be focusing on evangelism at the outset.

An example of vision statement would include the conditions that you would want to change at a church. When I arrived at a church where I was to take on the responsibilities of the youth pastor I began to evaluate even before I set foot in the office. I had long conversations with the outgoing youth pastor and sent email to the church. I did a demographic study of the city and talked to other youth pastors.

When I arrived at the church I began talking to the leaders, the parents and the teens. There were many questions about what kind of program that I was going to run. Since most people hate change I decided to keep running the same kinds of programs until I was further along in my evaluation.

Next I began to involve others in the evaluation/ vision process. Helping others to see the needs and the opportunities began to stir up a desire to see God do new things in the group. A sense of excitement was beginning to build. Together we began to dream about what the youth ministry could be. But I knew better than to confuse vision with dreams.

A vision is not a dream. It is a future oriented look at the conditions that God would like to develop in the ministry. It is not a wish list or wishful thinking. It is seeing the ministry through God's eyes for what it can be and do.

An example of a vision statement would be: To see a ministry that reaches each student at the level of their spiritual commitment. Or

To develop a ministry that targets the particular needs of early and late adolescents through developing separate Junior and Senior High Programs.

## Programs

"Think people not programs" seems to be a well known creed among youth pastors. It is a reaction against keeping that Sunday school program running after the students have graduated long ago and the teacher passed away. It is a reaction against beating a dead horse kind of thinking that if we just hit it hard enough in the right spot it is sure to get up! Possibly some places continue to run these kinds of programs and the creed is still needed. Hopefully most churches are now attuned to the fact that good programming is responsive to the needs in the church and community.

Another old adage is "find and itch and scratch it" or find a need and meet it. During the evaluation and vision setting process it is essential to determine what the needs are. This was fairly obvious to me at my last church when I stepped out of the Sunday morning service to check on something in the youth room. The halls in the church were littered with the bodies of loitering Junior High students. There were literally dozens of students who for some reason were not sitting with their parents in the service. They were too old for Sunday school and they felt they were too young for the Sunday morning service. There were a few options to meet this need. Set up a program to help parents learn how to get their kids to sit with them at church. Change the Sunday morning service to make it more appealing to Junior High students or develop a Junior High program concurrent with the Sunday morning service. Since we had decided that a separate Junior High ministry would be launched in September of the next year we decided to launch a Junior High Sunday morning program called Sunday Morning Live almost immediately. It was an instant success.

## Goals

I said that the Junior High program was a success and you probably pictured high numbers. That was one of our goals. Just clearing the halls of all the Junior High bodies during the service was a big step forward. Goals are targets that give you something to aim for. Even if you do not hit dead center you are at least headed in the right direction. One of the reasons that some leaders give up goal setting is the embarrassment of failing to meet the objective. Another reason is because they are not completely clear on what they wish to achieve. This could be because they are operating without a vision for the ministry or they are unwilling to take the time to stop, think, pray and plan. As we will see in our chapter on time management, the less planning you do the less time that you have. So much of your work involves, catch up, putting out fires, and scrambling to meet deadlines.

Good goals are not fuzzy. They are clear, recognizable and realistic. As pointed out in the growth contract in lesson 7, goals should be MAD. MAD goals are measurable (it is clear when they are achieved or missed) Achievable (can be accomplished in a specified amount of time and Dated (have a specific start and end point) A MAD goal might be “to lose 5 pounds in one month beginning just after I finish my crunchy bar.” It is measurable (5lbs) achievable (just over a pound a week) and it is dated (by the end of one month). These kind of goals can be observed in progress. I can weigh in each week. Fuzzy goals can sound very spiritual but are not very practical. A pastor can say to her group “Our goal is to become more loving.” How do you measure that? Instead she should determine by the end of the year we will have 6 fellowship activities to promote closer relationships in our group. “Closer relationships, is still fairly fuzzy but it is easy to count whether there were 3 or 6 fellowship events this year.

Here are a few of the goals that I set to establish a Junior High Ministry in my church.

- Recruit and train 3 couples who will work with the Junior High kids by August 2000 starting January 2000.
- Develop relationships with 20 junior high kids by arranging 6 weekly summer events in July and August.
- Establish a “congregation” of Junior High Students by initiating a Jr. High Sunday school class running from September 1999 to July 2000.
- Promote our Junior High Ministry by speaking 3 times in Chapel at the Christian middle school between January 2000 and June 2000.

Writing goals, then posting them or publishing them will keep you accountable to accomplish them. It also helps you to set achievable goals rather than pipe dreams. Are there goals that you have for your life or ministry right now? Why not right them out and post them.

## A Years Approach to Teaching: or Programming that Produces Disciples.

A few years ago I received this email from one of my students that emphasized a weakness in our youth ministry training. There had been many lectures on theology,

and philosophy vision and strategy, but what was missing was pulling it all together...

> Hi Ron!

> I keep meaning to ask you about two things:

> 1. What program do you use for your clip art (overheads)

> 2. What approach do you take in developing a year long or Semester

> based curriculum in youth ministry?

>> Don't feel you have to send me an exhaustive email to answer my

> questions. It'd be cool to get together when your not busy. Either/or,

> you can let me know. >

> Have a good one,

>> Mike >

I fired off a point form answer to his question which I have expanded here for your benefit. As you read it, try to imagine that you are the youth pastor of a group and are responsible for the nurture of a generation of young people in your church...

Dear Mike, to design a years program is an involved process...

### ***Getting Started.***

Remember that you are teaching/ programming for change. What characteristics do you hope to produce in each young person in the next three years? For growth level kids I focus on my DDS (Description of a Discipled Student) Based on an understanding of the Bible and developmental abilities of teens; I have determined what a discipled teen should look like. My objective is to create shared learning experiences to allow the Holy Spirit to produce these changes in the young people in my group. Three years is too much to wrap my mind around so I break the plan down into segments, topics, or series. Be sure to include changes that you want to see in their behaviour, attitudes, and understanding.

### ***Evaluation***

I start by evaluating what is their greatest need for teaching first. That is areas of weakness, ignorance or misconceptions. This can be done through informal surveys, quick quizzes, or polling the parents of the teens. (some of these surveys are available at EGAD youth ministry ideas. Check the links page for that and other resources.) Obviously, the better you know your group the more accurately you will be able to pinpoint their needs. When you are just starting out it is good to focus on relationships and issues. I have also started out with foundations of discipleship, that you normally find in new believers courses or follow up of new converts. The topics covered in these manuals are assurance of salvation, understanding the Lordship of

Christ in your life, the need for Christian Fellowship, how to pray, how to study the Bible, how to give away your faith, and they always have a chapter on giving to your local church! These will hold their interest while you do the work to find out what they really are ready to hear. Guaranteed, over the three years I set a high priority on making sure teens have made these following items a part of their lives prayer worship; fellowship relationship; word of God practical relevant teaching; service and evangelism

### ***Finding Resources:***

Finding resources for teaching on all of these subjects can be difficult. Some companies will throw a pitch at you that their curriculum will go through the whole Bible in three years, or that their product is the only one that you will need. Don't go that route. Evaluate all curriculum very carefully. At the same time, don't be afraid to create your own curriculum or learning experiences. Remember that there are more ways to teach than sitting kids in rows and preaching to them, or going through a carefully crafted state of the art, video supplemented lesson plan. :Your group deserves the same level of attention, prayer and preparation that you senior pastor gives your adult congregation. (Which hopefully is more than a retelling of a Chuck Swindoll message!)

### ***Research***

In my case that means researching a topic or sometimes turning to resources that I can adapt. Some of the things that I have tried are: "Experiencing God" by Blackaby is good for focus on relationship with God (there is also a teen edition available) "Improving your Serve" by Chuck Swindoll is good for working with service. Sometimes I take books made for adults and adapt the stuff to teens like Ordering Your Private World or Celebration of Discipline --advanced students can go out and by the book as can the leaders

### ***The Teaching Calendar:***

Planning it out For a years approach take a calendar and look at how many teaching nights you have. Days like good Friday, Christmas, march break, school end and other important events will normally mean putting a series aside for a night. Do long topics over a max of 6 weeks I like 3 week sessions then wind them down if I can get through one series a month that is spectacular.

Sometimes I do book studies and do selected chapters and have kids sign up for devotions that month on that book. I design sheets for them to record insights and prayer requests

### ***Keep it interesting***

Make it interesting: When doing a book study don't focus on the book --what! Focus on the real life issues in the book and promote them not the book: E.g. -incest, church fights, sexual immorality, idol worship, stumbling blocks, the meaning of true love, supernatural powers you can have --what is the book??????????? 1Corinthians -don't do a verse by verse study. Do a thematic study based on the needs of your group. Supplement the biblical teaching with research on the topic. Always start with

the topic then turn to the word if it just happens to be 1cor every week for 6 weeks that is cool even if the topic is Love in a Sex Sick World!

### ***Twelve 3 Week Series***

Teach in series: If you could get through 12 -3 week series in a year what would they be on?

MONTH	TOPIC
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

If each of those series was broken down into 3 specific topics what would they be? If those 36 topics will deal with only 36 items in your Description of a Discipled Student when will you cover the other 64 if you are trying to develop 100 characteristics in your group members?

### ***Other Teaching Times***

What themes and subjects could you cover on your retreats? That may get you up to the 50 subjects taught in one year. What topics will be covered in your Sunday school classes --how effective is that teaching? How can you make it more effective or find another time, or program to cover those topics.

Remember teaching is crucial but so is attendance. How do you keep the interest level high while covering the essential topics? It can be done if you are willing to work at it!

### ***Choosing Topics***

You need to hear from God: Overall you need to be really sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Yes the subjects are fundamental to the Christian life, but when you teach them can be according to God's timing. Events happen in the life of a church or a youth group that seem to dictate a need for certain teaching. (Remember the concept of teachable moments?) You will know that when the time is right as God leads you. In terms of preparation I plan all of the topics in a one week period of



intense prayer for the next 4 months of ministry --in about 3 days of fasting and prayer I will normally have decided on the next 12 messages/studies titles themes, and objectives-objectives come from my understanding of the characteristics that I want to develop in a fully devoted follower by the time that teen leaves my ministry.

### ***Description of a Discipled Student***

As I already mentioned, I call this my DDS or Description of a Discipled Student. This is not original. I borrowed it from Son Life ministries. My DDS is a collection of 100 traits that describe what a discipled teen will know, feel, and be able to do after three years in my ministry. The characteristics are based on an understanding of the Bible and what it expects of mature believers, and understanding of youth culture and the issues young people need to respond to, as well as an understanding of the developmental issues youth grapple with.

( I leave one week a month for a break seasonal event, or outreach event) With the titles all picked out, every time that I read I just put that information into that file folder with the title on it. When it comes to the actual message or lesson plan I prepare it the week that I am preaching or teaching it. By then all the research is done but I can still be sensitive to what is going on in the lives of the teens and the life of the church or community. I can also stay very current getting those last minute things off of Letterman, Star Trek, Friends, latest video release, spin magazine, south park, the news or what is happening at the local high school.

### ***Seasonal Approach***

Seasons of teaching and programming: the 4 teaching periods in my mind go as follows. Here are also broad categories I like to teach on in these seasons.

Sept- December(fall) –Focus on relationships, community building

Jan- March (winter)-focus on issues, theology, book studies

April-June (spring)-focus on character building, faith shaping

July and August (summer )-focus on friendship evangelism, outreach

### ***More than Just teaching***

Note that this approach to the calendar looks exclusively at the faith nurture aspect of the ministry. It is essential to look at what other aspects of the ministry need to be included in the calendar, like worship, fellowship, and outreach! Use discovery learning where ever possible so that learning takes place in other ways than just preaching or teaching.

>hope this helps so you got the position?! congrats!!!!

>your friend ron.

## Conclusion

A vision statement, purpose statement, programs and goals are required to keep youth groups on track. For Fields this means adhering to the 5 purposes of his church. Good programs and goals that carefully consider the faith development of the individual need to be established. Knowing what characteristics you want to develop in fully devoted teens and understanding where the majority are at in their faith shaping process. Like my student, you may feel that the responsibility of planning a year in youth ministry is overwhelming, but when there is a clear picture of the characteristics that you are hoping to develop in the young people, a clear vision for the ministry, and attainable goals the process is much more manageable

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## Chapter 5 Managing Life and Ministry

### Introduction

Out of control --his life was totally a mess when he showed up at my place. Here was the spiritually leader of a group of young people and he had hit the wall. His face in his hands he confessed, I haven't worked at anything all week. Not that I don't have tons to do -I just don't know where to start. I find myself sitting at my desk day dreaming or just hopping from one site to the next on the internet looking for some good idea that will work with my group, with my life. I go home and I have done nothing. I should be calling kids but I am too tired, drained, I have nothing to offer...

We sat down and made a list of everything he needed to do. We tacked on to the list all the reasonable and unreasonable expectations that the senior pastor and congregation had of him. Then the prioritizing process began.

*What must be done immediately?*

*What can you delegate?*

*What can you ignore?*

*What can be differed until you are caught up?*

Like a cluttered room in the hands of a hard working Mom, we could begin to see the floor in a few minutes. The clutter began to clear and the work started to seem manageable once again.

For many people in the helping professions who are “people persons” the administrative aspects of their work are often less than pleasant. Judging from the look of most youth pastor’s offices the majority are not the most organized people in the world. One youth pastor told me that his organizational system was based on the chaos theory. No matter what field you are in, organization is still of some importance. When it comes to youth ministry, how can parents trust you with there son or daughter if you cannot locate their permission slip!

In this lesson we will examine some life management principles that should help you to be more effective and balanced whether you work with youth or not.

## **Getting Control**

If you are going to go the distance in ministry you are going to have to get control of your life. I highly recommend that every student, teacher or pastor master the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." Hopefully as you read through this lesson you will be able to get a handle on some principles that you can put into practice immediately.

This is an interactive tutorial that will help you with your unit assignment to make a master schedule. You will do better if you follow all the steps in sequence.

### ***List areas of your life that are important to you.***

I choose to list Relational, Recreational, Vocational, Educational, Financial Other as the areas of my life that I want in balance. Relational refers to my wife and kids first, our extended families, friends and the world around us. Recreation, exercise and leisure are essential for staying healthy and alert. To re create is to rebuild. It is during this time that you should feel refreshed doing whatever refreshes you. It is not just sleep or watch tv. These can actually have the opposite affect. Vocational has the potential to swallow up the whole chart. Ministry is not a 9-5 kind of job. Unless you are careful it will consume every area of your life, destroying marriage, health, and relationships. While it is important to have clear goals for ministry it is equally important to have goals in the other areas of your life. Educational –Howard Hendricks teaches that if you stop learning today you stop teaching tomorrow. To go the distance continuing education whether formal or informal through guided reading is not optional. Financial goals are also essential. Many people have left youth ministry because it does not pay enough. While salaries can be low properly managed finances will always make the money go further. Graduating student often have high debt and low pay. Managing the little money very wisely will make a huge difference in the long run.

### ***List down the columns yearly goals***

For each of the areas above you need to develop goals that are meaningful or absolutely essential. Goals need to be measurable, achievable and dated. The more specific you are the more likely you will meet the goals. Although these are yearly goals indicate within the goal how often you will need to work at this to see it fulfilled. It may include calling your parents once a week if you live away from home or completing once course per semester if you are studying part time.

### ***Prioritize these goals (from most to least important to you)***

This is going to require discipline and honesty. If your life has been dominated by your work, ministry, a relationship, or recreation, you will need to gain a healthier perspective on life. Note also that I did not make a column for God. That was intentional since he is my top priority, he dominates in every category. Devotional times are a priority and relationally I need to spend time with him. He is also at the center of my education, finances, and vocation. Make sure that your goals have not excluded your Lord.

### ***Account for the number of hours per week that each will take***

After prioritizing you will need to determine how much time you can give to these priorities. When you add them all up hopefully they will allow time for sleep. You may have to go back and delete some of your goals of lesser importance.

### ***Plot the time of week where each of these will occur.***

Here is an example of a list of goals in various areas. It would be very valuable to go through this exercise and determine your priorities.

Relational	Recreational	Ministry	Educational	Financial	Other
Call my parents once a week.	Walk .5 hr a day, cycle to work in summer	Visit each of the students in their home in the next 3 months	Complete 2 courses this year	Develop a reasonable budget and maintain for one year	Learn to play guitar. Practice 15 minutes per day
Spend 3 hours a day with my wife	Take one day off per week, fast one day a week	Institute a discipleship group	Attend 2 conferences	Bring lunch to school never eat out	Yard work, car maintenance 4 hours
Spend 3 hours a day with my kids	Take 2 weeks of vacation per year	Recruit and train 3 new adult leaders	Do 2 book reviews for youth ministry magazines	Move in with mom and dad save expenses	Renovation . Paint each of the rooms by Jan 2002
Call each of my brothers and sisters once a month	Swim with family every Friday	See attendance reach 70 students by the end of the year	Subscribe to youth worker and group magazines	Pay down students loan	Quit 2 committees by June 1999
Do one lunch a week with a friend	Work out 2 times per week	Begin one campus bible study by Oct 1 1999	Update filing system spend one afternoon every 2 weeks	Pay tithes regularly	Bring friend to promise keepers
Take my wife out for dinner once every 2 weeks	Maintain minimum of 6 hours sleep per night	Maintain one outreach per month on a Friday -	Watch much music once a month for 2 hours	Open an resp and contribute 25 dollars a week	
Have a couple over once every 2 weeks	Cut back on breads, fats, and sweets.	Institute 4 cell groups by Jan 2000	Read Lord of the Rings	Stop buying coffee, make at home carry a thermos	

### ***Evaluate your goals***

Double check our priorities. Is God first in your life? Your goals should reflect that? Where does your family come in? Has ministry column out grown the rest of the goals and gone right off the page?

have goals evaluated by an accountability partner. One way to ensure your honesty is to have someone look at it and ask you the hard questions about your priorities. If you meet with this person on a regular basis they can also follow up and make sure that you have kept your commitments to these goals.

See how they fit in a one year plan.. As a list of goals with weekly, or monthly time allotments your goals may seem air tight. It may seem that your life will now have a sense of purpose wholeness devoid of anxiety. That is until you start to see these in the context of the whole year. Have you over programmed your life for one or 4 months. This has often happened to me as I took on extra teaching, speaking engagements, writing assignments and studying. What seems manageable from a distance is a nightmare to live through. Knowing your limitations and saying know to outside interruptions is essential to your sanity.

### **Create a master schedule** (see below)

Transfer your goals to your master calendar. Insert all the nonnegotiables first. Work hours or class times if you are a student can rarely be changed. Sleep works best at night. Mealtimes should coincide with family meal times. What aspects of your schedule need to correspond with others schedules, church times, outings, lessons. All of these things that you cannot change the time of should be inserted first. Now begin to insert your goals. Do they begin to come in conflict? Do you need an 8<sup>th</sup> day to the week? Then you need to return to your priorities. What can you delegate to others? What can you post pone? What was not that important after all?

If your goals are not reflected in your average week it is likely that they will not be accomplished. This is also a good way to check how serious you are about these goals. If you are not willing to make time for them, it normally means that they are not of the greatest importance to you. Sometimes you will need to make personal sacrifices other times you can not sacrifice any further.

## **The Tyranny of the Urgent**

One of the ways that this process gets sidelined is by the constant rush of demands that come from other people. These urgent requests may be urgent for them but may not have anything to do with your goals. These distractions are what give a youth workers life a sense of aimlessness and confusion. We can commit so much to other's demands that the work we have been called to do goes undone or is done at the expense of every other area of our lives

Stephen Covey, in his best selling Seven Habits of Highly Effective People provides a number of excellent principles. The first is "Start with the end in mind" what is it that you really want to accomplish. The other is concentrate on items in your life that are not urgent but they are important. Look at this chart below. Try to put the activities of your life in the box that best describes them.

## **The Time Management Matrix**

	<b>Urgent</b>	<b>Not Urgent</b>
<b>Important</b>	<b>Quad One</b> <u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crises</li> <li>• Pressing Deadline driven</li> </ul>	<b>Quad Two</b> <u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevention</li> <li>• relationship building</li> </ul>

	projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognizing new opportunities</li> <li>• planning , recreation</li> </ul>
<b>not important</b>	<b>Quad Three</b>  <u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interruptions, some calls</li> <li>• Some mail, some reports</li> <li>• Some meetings</li> <li>• Proximate pressing problems</li> <li>• Popular activities</li> </ul>	<b>Quad Four</b>  <u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trivia, “busy” work</li> <li>• Some mail</li> <li>• Some phone calls</li> <li>• Time wasters</li> <li>• Pleasant activities</li> </ul>

According to Covey, highly effective people spend as much time as possible in quadrant 2 of the time management matrix. These items may not be urgent but they are important. Most close relationships would fit in this category. If we neglect our closest relationships we will find that a crisis will arise. Most planning takes place in quadrant 2. It is important but not so urgent. However if we fail to plan we will have no time to plan because we will be constantly dealing with problem after crisis in quadrant one of the chart. It is easy to put off finishing your education, putting away savings for the future, even neglecting your health but then you will live in crisis mode. Some fore thought would save us much grief.

According to Covey, the more you invest in quadrant 2 activities, the smaller the other quadrants become. Look at your goals. Which ones will end up in quadrant 2? The more the better. Certainly there will always be things that are urgent and important but we don’t have to be overwhelmed by them.

## Master Schedule

I have often dreamt of my ideal day. It would include exercise, prayer and bible study, a productive work day, reading and relaxation. Time for family would be a premium. Many days come close to that perfect day, because I insist on it. I schedule for it and work toward it. It does not happen by chance. At the same time this perfect day is part of a bigger picture. That is the goals that I have set for my week, my month, the semester, and the year.

The master schedule is an outline that reflects the priorities in your life. The items in this schedule will stay the same pretty much from week to week. The specifics in

each block may change but the time allotments will stay the same. As a student you can work with a time table. At least your class times are mapped out for you. Travel times, meal times, church time, sleep time should all be considered. I have noticed with my students that even just trying to maintain a regular bed time is a huge challenge. Getting control of even just this area is a huge step forward for many.

## ***Weekly Schedule***

Here is a sample of a weekly master schedule that reflects some priorities, goals in a youth pastors life. The pastor is running a junior high and senior high program as well as a junior high Sunday school class. Lunches out are with students at high schools. The contingency block is left open in case interruptions arise. Monday is the pastors day off.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6	shower/ prayer	shower/ prayer	shower/ prayer	shower/ prayer	shower/ prayer	Sleep in	shower/ prayer
7	breakfast/ devos	breakfast/ devos	breakfast/ devos	breakfast/ devos	breakfast / devos	Sleep in	breakfast/ devos
8		Staff meeting	planning	Message prep		shower/ prayer	church
9		Staff meeting	Message prep			breakfast/ devos	Set up
10		planning					Sunday School
11		planning	promotion				church
12	lunch	Lunch [out]	lunch[out]	lunch[out]	lunch	lunch	Sunday School
1	contingen cy	contingenc y	contingency	contingency	continge ncy		lunch
2		Budget receipts		errands	Clean office		Visit or invite
3				errands	Meeting prep		
4				errands	Meeting prep		
5	supper/ dishes	supper/ dishes	supper/ dishes	supper/ dishes	Leaders meeting		
6							church
7	put kids to bed		Jr High Night	put kids to bed	Youth Night	put kids to bed	
8	Time with wife	Phone calls		Time with wife		Time with wife	Go out

9			Go home				
10					Burger King		Plan week
11	pray/ bed	pray/ bed	pray/ bed	pray/ bed	Go home	pray/ bed	pray/ bed
12					pray/ bed		

## Reevaluate

Take time each week to look at how well the master schedule worked for you? Did you feel in control or a slave to this schedule. I have found it useful to right down how the time was actually used rather than how I planned. Either it meant I had to plan better, be more disciplined, or change my schedule to reflect the realities of my life.

At one church I worked at the senior pastor required my weekly schedule every Tuesday morning at our weekly staff meeting. This forces me to plan my work and stick to my plan.

## Time Management Tips

I doubt that any of these are original to me, but here are some that have been particularly helpful in my ministry and my life (when I used to have one.)

1. Listen to tapes of messages, the Bible, books, seminars when you are driving alone or when doing manual tasks, shoveling snow, doing the bulletin, cleaning your office..... Maximizing this time is more useful than listening to music. For anyone who claims that they do not have time to read, or to read the bible the answer may be bible or books on tape.
2. A weekly news magazine or listening to news on the radio is less time consuming than the newspaper. There are 100,00 words in the newspaper and many distracting ads. Some people read their news on the internet but this too can be a huge distraction
3. Deal with paper once. See it, read it, respond to it, and file it. Multiple hours can be wasted on paper that needs to be found and dealt with. The less times you have to deal with the same piece of paper the better. Clutter on your desk has a way of distracting and causing anxiety in many people. It is also a poor example to young people to see that your office is as messy as their bedroom!
4. Keep office hours. People who say their whole life is ministry are often unfocused. Separate "the office" from home, or you will have no home life. (It is amazing how much you can accomplish in an 8 hour day! Jeanne Mayo, youth ministry veteran from Rockport, Illinois contends that youth pastors sometimes fall into the trap of long lazy lunches and multiple endless coffee breaks. A friend of mine who left youth ministry and now works in computer networking was amazed at the amount of work that gets done in a high tech day compared to the pace of some churches. Isn't God's work important enough to demand our *complete* attention?



5. Have youth accompany you with when you do everyday tasks. Invite two or three to run errands with you. Sometimes ministry happens in the most serendipitous fashion. Much of Jesus ministry seemed to take place on the way from one situation to another. Students shopping with me for a present for my wife get to see what real life is like and how embarrassed I can get in the lingerie department. Discussions about dating and marriage are sure to abound.

6. Take the time to plan. Plan your week, plan your day. Stick to your plan.

7. Have a contingency plan. Leave 1.5 hours a day blank for interruptions or delays. Delays will come but that is no excuse. You need to be expecting them. Rather than work a few hours later and miss dinner it is better to plan for interruptions. If the interruptions are constant and meaningless you may have to shut your door, take the phone off the hook and post a guard at your door.

8. Perfectionism is a curse. Do the best job possible in the amount of time available. That is my definition of a job well done. The best job possible in the amount of time available. I have seen pastors work days on a power point presentation. It was spectacular but the kids were not touched because he had not spent personal time with any of them in weeks. Perfectionism on trivial things robs student, leaders, and parents of your time.

9. Group small tasks together and do them all at once instead of picking away at them. It is better to concentrate for an hour and not get distracted.

10. Plan appointments back to back. 45 minutes is plenty for counseling; any longer and you just start going round in circles. (If you have to meet someone else they won't keep you on and on.) Students sometimes have huge quantities of undesignated time. You do not. Kids understand that or they will if you explain in a group setting. One overly dependent student can demand your attention for hours. Find ways to end your time together without hurting their feelings.

11. Spend at least 10% of your week in long term planning. Envision all the details necessary to put on an event and work back ward from that date developing a plan of what must be arranged by when. Advanced planning allows the possibility to delegate. People hate last minute responsibilities. You will have to do the work yourself if you do not plan ahead. That is a waste of your time and the precious resource of student and adult leaders by throwing work at them last minute. You can only do shoddy, makeshift work if you don't plan ahead.)

12. Get help. Teens can type, do filing, or set up a few hours after school. You may be able to pay them. Adults or university students could do many tedious timesaving tasks for you if they can see how these tasks are important for the overall ministry. Students sometimes need work study hours from their schools and some college students need internship placements. I have worked with high school and college students paid and volunteer and have been helped immensely.

13. Learn to say no. There are many times we cannot say no but there are times when we must. Know what God is calling you to do. Fulfill the duties of your job description and the goals that you have developed. (The other two hours left in the week you need to sleep or shower or eat, play with the cat or something)

14. If you have to eat, bring a lunch. Eating out is time consuming and gets expensive. If you are eating with teens bring your lunch (unless they're buying.)

15. Always carry paper and a pen -write down ideas for messages or activities as they come to you. It will put the minds at ease and will save much time later. (Keep a pen and pad by your bed.) Some people make excellent use of a Personal Data Assistant, Palm Pilot or some kind of hand held computer device. The key is use one system and stick to it. Carry it with you always.

16. Keep on top of your filing. Looking for things can kill an afternoon. Having resources at your fingertips saves lots of time. The extra time it may take to clean your office at the end of each day and more thoroughly at the end of each week, whether you work from home or from the church will make you more next week.

17. Know your body rhythm and tired times. Do manual tasks when you are sleepy. Do difficult thinking type tasks when you are most alert. My tired time of day is 2-5 in the afternoon. It is not the best time for counseling or reading. I get very sleepy and so that is when I do my errands. Driving in traffic seems to motivate me to stay awake.

18. Keep an up to date data base for form letters, and mail outs. Once established it will save hours in addressing envelopes etc. There are resources now that will help you with this. Pick up a copy of Youth Ministry Management Tools, by Olson, Elliot and Work. The accompanying CD has valuable information and forms, and files.

19. Schedule tasks directly into your day timer rather than making list after list of things to do. As I said before, have one system and stick to it. Some daytimers are so costly and bulky that you would not use them. Find what works for you and commit to using it always.

20. Keep planning and committee meeting short and on target. Plan them on evenings when you have to be at the church any way.

## Conclusion

Jesus told his disciples that the harvest is ripe and the workers are few. At harvest time there is a sense of urgency because there is only a short time to do a vast amount of work. For some people the problem is that they have to work harder, but for most of the people I know, they have to work smarter. The Lord also said work while it is day because the night is coming when no one can work. The urgency of the task we do needs to make us sober and alert, not wasting time but making up for lost time. This does not mean however that we are justified in neglecting our families and our health. God's work requires a sense of balance and perseverance. Going the distance requires getting control of our lives, sorting out our priorities, pursuing meaningful goals, and completing the work he has given us. This needs to be reflected in a weekly schedule that is well thought through and adhered to. There is just too much at stake to do anything less.

# Part Three Students, Parents, and Leaders

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## Chapter 6 Junior High Ministry

### Introduction

So far what you have read in Purpose Driven Youth Ministry applies to Senior High ministry. In this lesson we will focus on the early adolescent and attempt to integrate much of what we have learned about adolescent development as it pertains to students in the Wonder Years.

### The Wonder Years

A while back there was a TV show called The Wonder Years that aired on all the major networks. It depicted the life of early adolescents. It made me howl with laughter -more at myself than at the characters in the show. It also made me wince when I remembered the pain of so many of those experiences.

While you work on this lesson it would be advisable to revisit the wonder years. In fact one of the most useful exercises is to go through an old photo album or video tapes of yourself at that age and begin to remember the emotions of that time. From there you can go on to design excellent programming for jr high students.

### Why Junior High Ministry must be a Priority

#### ***1. IT IS A TIME OF NEGLECT***

Junior high or middle school students are often neglected by the church. Here are some of the reasons that this happens.

**We fear the unknown:** There are definite fears involved with jr high ministry. Early adolescents are quite unpredictable. Most leaders and volunteers have concerns

about getting into situations that are beyond them or out of control. There are just too many hidden variables that come with working with this age group.

**Working with early adolescents requires learning from Jr.. Highs:** The best experts on junior high students are probably not scientists. I have learned so much through my interaction with students. It requires humility when you have to ask them to explain their terminology, and it can be pretty boring to hear them talk in circles about things that you have very little interest in. These teens won't be too gracious when you don't know everything there is to know about their world. They take great pride in knowing something that you don't but that it's okay. Jesus became a man so that he could save humanity. Relational ministry means entering their world.

**Adults had bad experiences in early years:** Acne, embarrassing moments, spills, social blunders -Turning red yet as you are transported back to those teen years? The reason that many people avoid this age group is that it is just too painful to relive those memories. Empathizing with young people is going to demand, reliving those wonder years in your mind. Not a pleasant prospect for most adults.

**Leaders with fragile egos will suffer:** While preaching to middle school crowd the kids in the front row began to lift their hands. I doubted that they were getting blessed even though it has happened when I have preached. Distracted, I asked them "What's going on?" "We are shielding our eyes from the glare off your head, " they shouted back. Teens have honed their skills of insulting one another to a razor sharp, sometimes deadly edge. No matter how secure your self concept is, they will discover your Achilles heel and in one fell swoop you will be burned, dissed, roasted, toasted, and burnt crispy! If you are willing to subject yourself to that week after week, you are either called or as crazy as I am!

**Requires immersion in their culture:** Are you comfortable in the position you find yourself reading these words? Is it a safe place where you feel able to concentrate? Now put yourself in a middle school cafeteria or a crowded youth room, things are flying, music is blaring, people are buzzing all around. Feel the comfort level drop. Mix in some kids who are openly hostile to your faith, openly taunting you and using disturbing language. Jesus came among us sinners immersed himself in the filth of humanity and yet it didn't stick to him. We need to be willing to enter their world. For most people that is just too uncomfortable.

**Rewards are not seen until later:** There is not a whole lot of positive strokes that come with youth Jr. High Ministry. There is an incredible joy as you see young people commit their lives to Christ but oh the pain when you see glaring inconsistencies in their lives, or watch them walk away from faith altogether only weeks later. Caring for teens in transition is a work in progress. We don't see the results until much later. Also, egocentrism is part of the psyche of a 11-13 year old. They are not being mean when they forget to say thank you. Just being able to think about themselves from an outsiders point of view they can be pretty self absorbed. So after you wiped up their vomit at the Chubby Bunny contest and you try to console the youth, they are angry at you for setting up the event and embarrassing them. There are definitely some great rewards, but you had better stick around a while if you want to see them.

## **2. IT IS A TIME OF TRANSITION**

Another reason Jr high teens are neglected is because these students are in such a transitional stage of their life. There is a kind of wait-and-see attitude. Kind of like, if we just leave them alone during this time then we can do some serious work with them on the other side. On the contrary, though this is when the most care is needed. Let's look at the situation more closely:

**Everything is changing:** What student explained that God was morphing her and she had not idea what she would be like at the end of the process. Later we will discuss each of the physical, emotional, social development that will take place during puberty, but clearly it is the most radical transformation in the life of a human beside infancy. When so much is in flux it is essential for compassionate adults to be in their lives.

**It is a time when teens leave the church:** After over 17 years of working with you I have recognized the transition stages between childhood and adolescence and between adolescence and adulthood to be the most dangerous drop off rates for youth.. Often the statistic that almost 85 percent of adults in the church made that decision before the age of 18. I think we need to take a second look at when those teenage commitments are being made as well. I would guess that a majority of those again happen before the student reaches grade nine. If we do not give special attention to this transitional stage on the road to adult life we will likely lose these young people forever.

**Greater attention must be given to transition periods:** James Dobson, In Preparing for Adolescence compares puberty as a road. It is a road that approaches the canyon of inferiority. Families that are careful will help the young person navigate this treacherous route. Junior high ministry needs to be a priority in the church because road is a treacherous one.

### **3. IT IS A TIME OF OPENNESS**

One of the reasons that I love working with Junior High School students is the wonder at new experiences. Finally there are kids who have not heard my lame jokes before and I can actually get a reaction out of them!! There is an openness to the gospel that is just not there in the next stage of their lives. That is the positive side. Then there is the dark side of the wonder years. The drive for maturity is intense. They want to participate in a world of adults and want to take on adult behaviors, smoking, drinking, sex and driving -not in that order. More specifically this means that

**Jr. high students are naïve :**An appropriate analogy to describe this condition would be the story of Pinocchio on his way to school. On the way he is accosted by two worldly wise characters. Like any early adolescent he is not aware of his own naiveté and falls into their clutches. The media giants will do any thing to cash in on the money from this demographic. They literally create stars to target them. No thought is given about how giving this market what they want reinforces negative values. These younger teens have very little discernment, yet they consider themselves mature and media savvy.

**They want to experience everything:** "How do you know drugs are bad if you haven't tried them?", Sandra asked without trying to be threatening. It was a legitimate question. Teens operate on what David Elkind, child psychologist, calls "The Personal Myth." Someone else's experience does not apply to them. They have to experience for themselves. Those of us who have had a little more experience with life realize that not all experiences are healthy. Helping these youngest of teens to see some of the effects of some of these experiences can help them make better choices.

**Open to change personality:** one theory of personality development describes teens trying out roles like the way they put on clothes in the morning. They are experimenting. Part of it is trying to discover who they are and part is trying to become someone that they are not, maybe someone they idolize (not necessarily their mom or dad) That is exciting because positive role models can make such an

important impact. God wants to conform us to the image of his son. What a time to be shaped and molded. Junior high ministry has the awesome opportunity to partner with the Lord and the family to help shape the values and the character of that young person. That is if we give this ministry the priority that it deserves..

**Who will reach them if we do not?** The opportunity for youth workers and adult volunteers to impact lives is immense, but the competition for a hearing in their lives is fierce! I can think of some negative role models in those formative years who made a profound impact on my life as well. One was a leader in training who felt at liberty to share his impure thoughts with us prepubescent boys. Another was my District Manager for my paper route, who drove fast, drank while he drove and had no respect for women, his own wife, or authority in general. Somewhere back there I determined that I was going to get a powerful van and disregard the rules of the road.

#### **4. IT IS A TIME OF DECISIONS**

As I stand in line at MacDonald's I am impressed with how simple they have made their selections. Although they have complicated the amount of products they serve, they narrowed the combos to choices one through five. Not bad planning. In a world of complex choices they have solved your lunch dilemma quite nicely. I never use the numbers but plenty of people do. Teens want to be able to order from the menu of life instead of having Mommy Daddy me or you to do it for them.

**They want to make their own decisions:** The irony of this is that youth culture dictates what those choices should be. As one sophisticated kid put it "I want to be an individual like every body else!" He saw the irony in wearing his gap khakis and matching shirt to express his individual sense of style, but seeing it was not going to change his behavior. Part of what good youth ministry does is help bring kids to whole other buffet table of choices where they can taste and see that the Christian life is the good life. But equally important is letting them choose what to put on their plate.

**They can decide to follow Jesus:** A very well respected author and leader stated in a debate that "Teenagers are not capable of a life long commitment to anything, let alone the Christian faith." I beg to differ. Granted, these commitments must be renewed at important junctures along the way, but I have seen hundreds of young people make decisions to serve Christ . Most of them are still serving him today. It is a time to decide. It is decision that they should be presented with clearly and reasonably without pressure or guilt manipulation.

#### **5. IT IS A TIME OF GREAT NEED**

When Jesus looked out on the multitude he had compassion for them because they were helpless and harassed like sheep without a shepherd. That is precisely how I see Junior High school students. Looking for any kind of direction, looking for love in often the wrong places they get hurt and often end up hurting each other. Just to understand the plight of these sheep more clearly look at just two of the many sources of difficulty.

**Physically they mature very early** -In adolescence by Santrock (8th edition) The author explains that every decade of the past century youth encountered puberty 6 months earlier than the decade before, so that the average age for menarche in girls is ten years old. Sexual experiences for youth are happening at early ages. So on the one hand they are experimenting with adult sexual behaviour but mentally and emotionally they cannot handle the decisions.

**They exposed to too much too soon.** The title "Raising PG kids in an R rated world" describes parenting of the millennial kids. In some ways they see themselves as so street smart and media savvy but they are overloaded with images and mature data that they do not have the tools to filter.

## **II. Developmental Issues in Jr.. High Ministry**

Effective programs will capitalize on an understanding of early adolescent development. Each of these will be briefly reviewed. For a more thorough treatment of all of this material consider my self study call Adolescent Development for effectiveness in youth ministry. Other excellent texts exist. One of my favorites and is Junior High Ministry by Wayne Rice.

### **1. PHYSIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Secondary sexual characteristics** –Development of pubic hair, changes in voice, breast development, all are part of the further development for young people. These are noticed by the opposite sex and adults. Young people experience concern as their body begins to change.

**Increased need for privacy**- With the onset of puberty is need for greater privacy. There may be greater concern for hygiene, longer showers, and more time spent privately in front of a mirror.

**Awareness of their body** –With the emerging self consciousness, is a greater concern with their physical body. This is sometimes closely connected with self esteem.

**Mind body problem awkwardness**- Teens may be reluctant to serve at banquet, or do things where they will be noticed for fear of clumsiness. They are growing rapidly and for some young people, beside the gangly, or leggy appearance, there is a lag between how long they remember their feet or arms to be and the actual length.

**Anxiety**- My brother used to pray each night that he would be 6 feet tall. He is only 5 foot 4 inches. His concern is felt by many young people. They fear that at the tail end of puberty they may be “short” changed.

**Caste system based on physical attributes develops** –Recently a movie entitled “Shallow Hal” was released. Hal is shallow rating people entirely on their physical appearance. This school yard caste system that evaluates people on their sex appeal. Those who place at the lower end of the scale are considered losers who are excluded from the dating scene.

**Male female tension develops the rules change.** During latency it is normal for boys and girls to express revulsion over the opposite sex. Same sex friendships are pursued and the opposite sex is excluded. With puberty the rules change. Socially, more mature youth begin to develop opposite sex friendships and will often begin to date. Difficulties result when there is fear of the opposite sex resulting in uncomfortable barriers.

### **2. SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Capable of adult sexual activity.** With the early onset of puberty in this decade early adolescents are capable of reproduction. With the flood of knowledge available

through TV, movies and the internet youth are experimenting at earlier ages with sexual activity including sexual intercourse.

**Sexual identity formation, gender, and orientation.** The whole gender issue is more cloudy than ever before. Children coming into adolescents wonder if they are straight, gay, or bisexual.

**Curiosity, hunger for reliable information.** With all of the myth available in society teens are curious for the truth about sexuality. Teenage girls may turn to magazines like cosmopolitan reading articles that are geared to adults but know that there is a teen audience. Boys will be introduced to pornography in magazines, videos and internet that will reinforce the myths about sexuality.

**Surge of hormones.** The adolescent males will likely experiment with masturbation as will a growing number of females. Changes in hormonal levels will bring about changes in mood as well.

### **3. INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Concrete to abstract reasoning:** As the student develops the ability to think about thinking (meta cognition) and to see themselves as a player in society students begin to question authority and thinking becomes more relative. Information processing speed will increase as will the ability to organize that information.

**Give order and reason to past experiences.** During this time students will rethink children's stories at a new level. They will begin to make connections between cause and effect even in terms of social interaction. Students may have sudden flashes of insight to earlier experiences.

### **4.. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Move from dependence on family to dependence on peer group.** While the centre of the students life has been the family in early child hood progressively the normal child will venture out further and further. Some adolescents will almost entirely exclude their parents from what is really going on in their lives as they relate exclusively to a small group, or cluster of close friends. This peer group forms a sort of bridge over from child hood to adulthood.

**Missing rites of passage.** Roles and status in North American society are blurred in the teen years as the transition to adulthood is long and convoluted. In some societies the transition to adulthood is marked clearly by rites of passage that may change the individuals status in the community over night, or a period of a few weeks.

**Seek significant others.** As identity and self concept emerge their becomes a greater capacity to share oneself with others. When identity issue are resolved then they can enter Erickson's next stage and develop intimate relationships

**Adults can have a huge impact.** During the identity crisis of youth role models make an important impact. Parents and significant adults in their lives influence their development.



## **5. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Positive self esteem vs. inferiority.** Emotions and identity are closely tied. Students whose self esteem is crushed in adolescents can be severely depressed, even suicidal. Poor self esteem is related to a wide range of at risk behaviors.

**Identity formation vs. role confusion.** The task of adolescence, according to Erickson is to develop an integrated self concept. Those who do not will “come undone” like the Beatles song explains and have a fragmented personality under stress.

**Personal fable.** Part of the identity development process is considering that the experiences you face are unique to you. Another expression of the fable is that “it will not happen to me.” The student truly believes “others may contract aids during unprotected sex, but not me.”

**Patchwork self.** Growth by substitution, instead of the slower more tedious process of identity integration leaves youth with fragments of personality that David Elkind calls a Patchwork self. Students will be a different person in different situations.

**Imaginary audience.** With the ability to see oneself from another perspective and along with adolescent egocentrism students can falsely assume that all eyes are on them. They believe that they are being watched in all situations.

## **6. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**It's a time of questioning.** True faith is not accepted blindly. It must be tested. As Stephen Jones has pointed out, confronted with evolution and alternative lifestyles students must move from affiliating with the faith of their parents to personalizing their faith. Part of this process is questioning.

**Accepted faith becomes owned faith.** The move from accepting the beliefs of the family to developing their own belief system is an involved process. Stephen Jones calls it “faith shaping.” The process involves seven tasks, as well as many cycles of transforming experiences that happen throughout one's life time involving interaction between nurture, encounter, and decision. This cycle is repeated again and again and spiritual formation occurs.

## **III. Implications of Development**

### **1. PHYSIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Avoid boys against girls competition-** Girls may be stronger, taller, and more verbal than boys. In most ways they are two years ahead of the boys developmentally. Direct competition can become cruel and vicious. Boys, feeling threatened, may hurt the girls.

**Don't embarrass them.** It is simply to pick out the physical characteristics that young people are embarrassed about. Leaders have often been as juvenile as the youth by ridiculing kids just to get a laugh from the group. The devastation experience by being bullied by a leader could cause a youth to leave the group and never return.

**Prepare Sunday school children for adolescence.** James Dobson has developed a course for parents and children on preparing for adolescence. It is too late to start discussing the physical emotional and social changes after they have already occurred. This is one area where churches could be much more proactive.

**Have male and female staff persons.** There are many issues that males will not discuss with a female leader and many that the girls will not discuss with a male leader. A mixed gender staff who practice relational ministry is essential.

**Allow for privacy and camps activities** etc This is obvious but often disregarded. I attended a camp that did not even have doors on the washroom stalls! We hung up towels on the doors. Some young teens are comfortable to change in front of their friends but some are not. This needs to be expected and respected.

**Use co operational games.** Because of varying strengths of those who are early bloomers and those who mature late many games in youth ministry are just not fair. Games that do not require speed, strength or stamina put all the kids on equal footing. Games that create winners at the expense of many losers are not advised.

## **2. SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Provide accurate information.** Junior highs can be so immature when it comes to talking about sex, unfortunately their leaders can be also. It is important to become comfortable talking about sexuality with youth in a mature professional manner. If not bring in a public health nurse or a professional who can.

**Unlearn sexual myths.** Half the work that needs to be done is to find out what teens believe about love and sex. Much of the information is false. Most of the stereotypes are wrong.

**Help students develop healthy opposite sex relationships.** Many parents do not approve of their young people dating before sixteen and there is ample reasoning behind this stand. At the same time it is important for young people to see the opposite gender not as a potential date, but a sister or brother in Christ. One thing a youth group can do is remove the mystique surrounding the opposite gender and encourage group discussions, fellowship events, and opportunities to see each other as people and not objects.

**Create an atmosphere of openness to discuss sexual, developmental issues.** There is the assumption that only some subjects are appropriate for the church and sex is certainly not one of them. Sadly Christian teens need to get their advice about dating and sex in the chat room or the locker room.

## **3. INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Teach them to think critically.** As powers of reason are sharpened sometimes teens turn them on the church rather than on the multinational corporations who use MTV to sell them products from Acne cream to Televisions. Thinking critically means using intellect to sharpen faith and gain a keener perception of the world and its seductions

**Provide opportunities for discussion.** Teens need the opportunity to begin to share their ideas and have the opportunity to receive feedback. Some sharp teens may try to be devils advocate and provoke others in the group. Wise leaders are able to use this attempt to polarize a discussion to make it more interesting for the whole group.

**Give them bible study skills.** There are college level students with a grade three understanding of the scriptures. Students are expected to analyze poetry in school

need to be expected to read and understand the bible. Actual hands on use of a bible in the youth ministry or the church service is very valuable.

**Help them to apply scripture to real life situations.** Discovery learning allows students to find the implications for life from a lesson. It may be easier to preach to youth, but at most these students will retain 20 % of what they heard. Discover learning raises retention and deepens understanding.

#### ***4. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT***

**Foster healthy relationships with parents, siblings, and friends.** Our faith is lived out in the context of relationships. Helping teens to recognize this and love those around them is a challenge considering what they are going through developmentally.

**Establish communication between friendship clusters.** Teens will normally find 2-3 young people that they will associate with as a surrogate family. Recognizing this it is important to see a student in the context of their friends. Rather than try to disassemble these groups leaders are wise to find ways to mix these groups with others in the youth ministry.

**Give special attention to outsiders.** Kids who are ostracized by the group are at great risk. Jesus said that the good shepherd goes after the lost sheep. Ministry requires this kind of intervention in the lives of teens.

**Build a loving caring community in the Jr. high group and total youth ministry.** The greatest witness that any group has to the world is the love that we have for one another. This is a huge stretch for junior high boys especially who are gravitating toward sex role stereotypes that view love as only something that takes place between couples. Becoming a loving group is such a crucial objective that it really must take priority. It must be a constant prayer concern.

#### ***5. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

**Be patient with huge mood swings.** As teens face the world barometric self esteem is going to fluctuate like the weather. Teen relationships are known for their transitory nature and the day to day can seem very much like a roller coaster ride.

**Be liberal with praise.** Affirmation not only from leaders but other students can be a real strength to any teen. Encouraging, complimenting a youth goes such a long way.

**Do not condemn inconsistency.** In consistency goes with the territory in youth ministry. Fields points out that students will “act their age.” Often leaders hope for better, but even “spiritual” 14 year olds will vacillate on their commitment

**Preach grace.** As teens work through many issues in their personality some live under a constant cloud of condemnation. Moral development points out to them their inability to meet the commands of scripture, many will make wrong decision. Grace speaks to the adolescent condition. Grace tells students that they are loved although they are unworthy in and of themselves.

**Model acceptance:** When a teen with poor hygiene and anti-social behavior comes into a youth meeting you can bet that the group is gauging your reaction. To the extent that the leader shows unconditional love and acceptance kids will follow

the example. Paying more attention to leadership type kids, or popular teens will repulse the rest of the members of the group.

**Love unconditionally.** Love that cannot be earned or lost is a rare thing in this world. If teens receive this kind of love it can transform them forever. Communicating this kind of love in appropriate ways is a powerful force in the development of a young person.

**Don't label kids.** In Max Lucado's popular book called simply, *You are Special*, the main character is covered in dots that represent the imperfections in his life. The labels fall off however when he comes in contact with his maker. Love does not label. Jesus had a way of labeling people with titles that reflected their potential. So Simon become peter, the Rock. Believing in students instead of writing them off or labeling makes all the difference in their lives.

## **6. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

**allow for questioning:** Don't doubt! This is the message that some kids hear no matter what is being said. Jesus instead invites the doubting Thomas to come closer. That should be our response. Students with questions should not appear threatening or rebellious to leaders. These same students will come through this phase to a faith that they own.

**challenge them to decide.** At the same time the faith cycle requires nurture, encounter and decision. Junior high students are fully capable of making a decision to follow Jesus. This decision may be redefined, broadened, deepened, and further fortified, but this decision can stick.

**teach about real life issues.** One of the biggest criticisms that youth have with the church is that it is irrelevant to their daily experience. Effective youth programming addresses real life issues using the timeless scriptures.

**help them to articulate their faith.** As teens begin to organize what they believe they need to be able to express that faith to others. Sharing their faith will bolster that faith. It is best to have them begin to share their faith with those who already believe and can affirm them. Among their peers some confusion can be clarified. Teens will also begin to see where others are at in the faith shaping process.

**get them involved** Teens need to be able to see faith in action. They need to see faith that works. This is best seen in their family and in their church. One of the most powerful influences though, is seeing other teens live out their faith.

**use discovery learning.** Since teens are going to have to own this faith, discovery learning helps them to come to their own conclusions, and make their decisions about faith. If teens commit to a truth that they have discovered in the bible this commitment is much more valid than if they assent to what they are expected to believe.

## **IV. Programming Basics For Jr. High Ministry**

Whatever model is employed, effective JR. High ministries characteristically includes most of the following:

## **1. VARIETY AND DIVERSITY**

It has been said that variety is the spice of life. In youth ministry it seems to be life itself. But how do we make this happen given most people's limited creativity?

**Recognize differing interests and abilities.** Developmentally, Junior highs are all over the map. Knowing all of the members in a group and being able to gauge their interests and abilities will be valuable when choosing activities and lessons.

**Maintain interest and enthusiasm.** Different aspects of the program will motivate different teens. Some may genuinely seek an encounter with God. Others are more interested in an encounter behind the chapel with a member of the opposite sex. Recognizing these various motivations wise leaders make sure that at least part of the program appeals to the student. One approach espoused by Fields and others is to have separate programs for students of varying commitment levels.

**Incorporate ideas from Jr. highs.** One of the best ways to maintain interest is to talk to the members in the program. What are their interests. The boys in my group were interested in ball hockey and the girls were interested in the Senior high boys. It was not much to build a program around but it did help to understand why they were not enjoying our thematic study of Malachi!!

## **2. INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION**

Maximum involvement equals maximum commitment. This is an axiom of junior high ministry. The more input that junior high students put into a program the more they will be committed to that program. Finding a multitude of ways to involve all of the students increases attendance and attentiveness. Here are some of the other reasons involvement must be a priority in ministering to Junior High Students.

**Circumvents many discipline problems.** Programs that involve students in the discovery learning process are less likely to encounter the chaos that results from a room of bored 11-13 year olds. If you do not give them interesting to do, likely they will find something themselves.

**Holds attention of easily distracted teens.** As teens learn by doing instead of just listening their minds are engaged. Active learning is so much more effective than passive learning. It takes much more effort to organize learning experiences than to write a 15 minute sermon, but the effort is worth it. One teacher explains: "If they do not learn, I have not taught!"

**Communicates respect and appreciation for early adolescents.** Allowing teens to run much of their program, open a Bible, explain a passage to others, organize an outing, or write a newsletter gives affirmations much more so than handing out attendance awards. Respect is communicated when their contribution is accepted and implemented.

## **3. MEANINGFUL RESPONSIBILITY**

Allowing teens to take on meaningful responsibilities (beside stacking chairs or blowing up balloons) is essential for the following reasons:

**Young teens are eager to contribute.** Motivated properly, the younger Jr High students are still eager to please their teachers. Providing meaningful responsibilities brings out the best in them. Conversely, giving them no responsibility is a put down that says, "when we want your opinion or involvement we will ask for it."

**Creates an opportunity to affirm giftedness of teens.** Jackie is 13 and runs the snack bar in her school. She handles the cash and makes the purchases. At her youth group she is not even allowed to be an usher. Jackie recently joined another youth group that offered her greater opportunities for involvement. Students can play instruments, write poetry, organize games, take attendance, send out birthday cards. Other students may have abilities with computers, web page design, or sound recording. All of these can be used for God and for the group.

**Opportunity to develop peer leadership.** Junior high groups that are separate from Senior high groups provide opportunities for 12 and 13 year olds to develop leadership skills. When placed with the older students likely they would not be allowed to take positions of leadership unless it was just token representation of the “kids”

**Hold interest of achievers.** Tony Campolo has said for years that we lose our sharpest young people not because we make Christianity too hard, but because we make it too easy. I agree. Meaningful responsibility will challenge early adolescents to give their very best.

**Valid outlet for commitment to Christ** When my brother's leg was in a cast for six weeks the muscles atrophied to the point that he had difficulty walking when the cast came off. Our faith atrophies when it is not exercised. Christians at all ages need to exercise their faith. Involvement is an expression of our commitment to Christ. It is a way to live out our faith in a meaningful way. Provide safe opportunities for Junior High or middle school students to do this go miles toward raising expectations and moving kids along the process toward maturity.

#### **4. INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION**

Interaction and communication are essential to a junior high ministry. Models of youth ministry that demand students to sit in rows and speak at them for an hour disregard the developmental characteristics of young people. Here is some of the rationale behind allowing teens to interact:

**Chance to develop verbal and social skills.** One of the greatest gifts to give kids is the ability to communicate. Studies show that better communicators are happier, healthier, more successful and more confident than those who are non or poor communicators.

**Opportunity to experience Biblical Fellowship.** Communion is a word that expresses a sharing of oneself with another. It comes from the same root as communication. How often kids keep important things inside. I have often have teens share things that they have never shared with a living soul before they were given the opportunity in a group of teens who cared for them.

**Builds self esteem.** The ability to interact with others and share your ideas is closely related with positive self esteem. Teens who even have just one good friend to talk to are much more emotionally healthy than those who are isolated and unable to talk to anyone.

**Channel natural tendency of Jr. in a positive manner.** For some Jr High kids, talking is no problem. Keeping quiet is the hard thing. But have you listened lately to the subject matter that Jr High boys and girls obsess over? Let me just say that it is not the meaning of the hypostatic union of Christ! Effective youth ministries allow younger teens to venture out into topics like their fears, anger, hopes, beliefs, and dreams.

**Chance to build relationships with role models, youth and adult.** Interaction with mature Christians allows teens to see other viewpoints than their

teachers at school, their parents, or their friends. This level of interaction shows teens that there is more to adult existence than what is portrayed in movies and on TV.

## **5. PLAY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

“Won’t they just sit still for ten minutes!!” One frustrated volunteer demanded. Yes they can but why do they need to? I responded. Granted, there are times when young teens should sit still and listen but expert teachers can have a much longer teaching time but incorporating movement in the lesson. Some of the other reasons to implement high levels of activity in a youth group are:

**Young teens learn as they play.** During a serious talk in the youth room a guest speaker stuck a finger in Johnnies face and demanded, “What did I just say?” Johnny has been tying another students shoes together, stopped and to the shock of the speaker, gave back to him word for word the last two minutes of the sermon. Not every 13 year old could have pulled off what Johnny did, but many could. Incorporating learning and play channel the restless activity in teens and facilitates learning.

**Element of fun and humor disarms negative attitudes.** As teens begin to gravitate to the peer group as us them mentality begins to form between them and their teachers. Some one has said that if you can get people laughing you can sell them anything. Bad, antiauthority attitudes can rob teens from hearing what God is trying to say to them. When they are having fun in the learning process they had recognize that they are learning, but they are!

**Fun is essential in the relationship building process.** One of my friends recipes for a great meeting with Junior Highs is food, fun and fellowship. Youth will return to a meeting where they had fun. Teachers who making learning fun connect with kids in a very powerful way. Also, fun brings down barriers between different kinds of youth. A group will have kids from varying segments of the youth subculture who would have nothing to do with each other at the local middle school or Junior High school campus.

**Physically, sitting still is arduous** --Keep em moving! May be another axiom of Junior High ministry. When muscles are growing at the same rate as toddlers leaders should half expect the same need for movement as toddlers. Sitting can be uncomfortable for rapidly growing teens. A good jr high program takes seriously the need for student to stretch their muscles at each meeting.

## **6. A SAFE ENVIRONMENT: DISCIPLINE AND LOVING LIMITS**

Some leaders oppose setting rules for youth groups, feeling like this will set them up as the bad guy. Sadly in the absence of rules chaos reigns. Here are some of the reasons why the majority of youth workers establish clear guidelines for behavior with Junior High students.

**There is no freedom without limits.** A study was done in a public school with a very large property. The fences were removed and the behavior was monitored. Strangely they huddled in the center of the school yard like cattle. They became afraid to venture out to where they used to play close to the fence. Teens need to know where the boundaries are to have a sense of freedom to explore.

**No teaching takes place in chaos.** I have no respect for teachers I had in my youth that had poor class room management skills. No one learned anything or even

liked the teacher who seemed to want to befriend all of the students. The most loved ones were those who maintained control in the class room but were approachable if we needed extra help.

**We owe it to the students to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to spiritual growth.** In a chaotic youth room, the students do as they please and this is often at the expense of others in the room. This is not fun or safe. For sure you will lose the brightest, most interested students. Parents will feel no need to send their kids to any program that gives no benefit to their child.

**Discipleship has discipline as a root.** Our culture lacks discipline yet it is one of the greatest needs of our day. It is easy for disciplined students, athletes, or workers to set themselves apart from their colleagues. One of the objective good youth workers have is to disciple young people. This discipline must be practiced in and out of church. We do teens a disservice to allow them to run wild in the youth program whether they have made a commitment to Christ yet or not.

**Relationships are built on mutual respect.** Youth ministries must communicate this core value. When kids run wild in a room, talk over the speaker, or ignore the leaders, they are develop horrible habits. They would not get away with this in school. The attitude reflected for the leadership is –You cant tell me what to do, or I have no respect for you as a leader.

**Teens can contribute to the structure and limitations set.** Even the teens who are acting out are probably not happy with the environment. Good leader will involve them in the process of establishing guidelines for behaviour. Using this method with various groups that I have worked with headed off problem behaviors before they had a chance to develop.

## **7. POSITIVE ADULT CHRISTIAN ROLE MODELS**

Another element of all effective youth programs is a leadership team of caring adults who minister to the teens. Here are the reasons that this is so:

**Diversity of quality Christian adults has a huge impact on the lives of young people.** I can remember the effect of two adults especially during my early teen years. They had a profound affect on my life. Unfortunately it was a negative affect. How much more can caring adults influence kids in godly ways. Their views on faith, church, marriage, material good, media –all can make a profound difference.

**Kids gravitate to hero worship** -the responsibility to be genuine, sincere, and faithful is crucial. In an interview Britney Spears was asked what it was like to be a role model for young girls. She said it was “cool!” In fact it is a huge responsibility. The scriptures indicate that it is better to tie a mill stone around ones neck and jump into the sea than to lead one of these little ones astray. Whether volunteers like it or not the teens are watching. What they say, what they think, and how they act are all under close scrutiny. The wonderful thing is that leaders who love God and are growing in their relationship with Jesus shine amongst the other darkened and dirtied media heroes adored by teens.

## **8. OPEN COMMUNICATION AND HELP FOR PARENTS**

Excellent Junior High ministries do not ignore families. If any thing they make family a priority in their thinking, planning and goal setting. This is wise for a number of reason:



**Parents can be as apprehensive as when the child was a new born.** It is hard to describe how vulnerable parents of junior high students can be. Communication with them and providing helpful resources for them will be a help to the family and to the youth ministry. When parents are assured that the youth ministry will not be critical of their parenting skills, or try to compete for the affections of their child (ren) there is much better cooperation.

**There is an openness, for support and helpful information.** Good families produce good kids in general. Working with families who are open for help and encouragement is a step toward healthier homes.

**The parents are very interested.** One of the frustrations of youth pastors is that the parents are not concerned about their child's spiritual growth. When the teens are younger there is a greater interest in seeing God at work in their lives. Good ministries recognize this and help channel parents into parenting classes, or support groups for parents.

To facilitate parents ministry great leaders will:

**Be open, and organized** -communicate clearly and inform them early. One of the best ways to establish good rapport with families is to let them know about upcoming events, costs, and other details.

**Be an excellent listener.** Good youth workers don't wait until there is a complaint before they decide to have anything to do with a parent. Looking for input from parents formally and informally makes a huge difference.

**Create opportunities for information sharing:** As mentioned above, family forums, parents meetings, information meetings, or even just a phone call to keep parents in the loop will be very much appreciated. Parents who may have been hostile toward the ministry can be won over just by hearing their concerns.

## **V. Ministry Models: E.G. The New Team Approach**

Here is the outline of just one approach to youth ministry. One important evaluation question as one works with Junior high is: Is Jr. High Ministry the same as Senior High ministry with just a few modifications or is it fundamentally different requiring a very different approach. This model assumes that Junior High ministry is fundamentally different. (see *The Exuberant Years*. Ginny Ward Holderness)

1. **Based on teams of adults and youth.** The large group is not the focus of attention in this model. The small team is! Teaching, activities, outings arise from the team.
2. **Leaders choose youth for their teams.** A draft pick is used where leaders consider who they can relate to and what youth clusters should stick together. Teams of 5 to ten are formed with one or two leaders. I prefer having two leaders per group if at all possible.
3. **Teams plan what they would want to do this year.** In September the leader pulls their team together (at the church or in a home) and begins to plan out the year of youth ministry.
4. **Aspects of the plan are delegated to members called responsible persons.** When the plans are made, responsible persons take on responsibilities to make sure the plan gets off the ground. If responsible persons fail the event or activity does not take place.

**5. Learning topics are also determined by the teams.** When the leaders meets with the group, the group also helps map out topics for the years. This may include about 36 topics if teaching takes place 3 times a month.

**6. Team Leaders meet together on a regular basis.** Leaders need to meet and report on what their group is doing so they meet with other leaders, for prayer, support, and resources. Leaders are accountable to the youth ministry leader, pastor, or director.

## **VI. Characteristics Of The Effective Jr.. High Worker**

While some of these characteristics may apply to senior high ministry as well, some of these are unique to working with younger teens. The effective junior high worker should have:

**1. Have empathy and understanding.** Never are teens as vulnerable as in the early years. Sensitive leaders who will feel what the kids are going through add a sense of legitimacy to their fears and struggles. Teens feel understood around this sort of leader who will not mock them for their concerns, worries, anxieties, and frustrations

**2. Able to develop real friendships:** It is not enough for a leader to love kids. Leaders need to be healthy adults who have their own friendships. Sadly, youth ministry sometimes attracts people who are overgrown adolescents who feel important among young people. When selecting leaders it is better to find people who do not need friendships with youth to feel fulfilled. Find people who are fulfilled in their personal relationships already and from this wholeness can minister effectively to young people.

**3. Possesses patience under pressure.** I have phenomenal respect for Junior High Music teachers. I have observed their composure despite the din created by 50 students hacking away at their tortured instruments. Junior high pastors are sometime held in the same awe by parents and other pastors. Those who work with early adolescents will be victimized by their relentless tasteless humor, impractical jokes, and general obnoxious manners. Newbies will be sorely tested. Students will push a worker to find their limits. It's a cruel game but part of the junior high experience. Workers will develop a thick skin or leave.

**4. Project a positive attitude.** No one can tolerate a morbid pessimist. Teens certainly do not need any more depressing voices than what they hear on the radio. Leadership is discouraged by dissenting voices on the team that have a knack for discovering why nothing can work. People who get under the weather should probably volunteer in another ministry at the church. Teens need people of faith and hope who, though realists, are convinced of God's goodness in all situations.

**5. Have a sense of humor.** This does not mean that they have to be a stand up comic but it means more that they are able to laugh at teens jokes. One of the things that has kept me in youth ministry as long as I have stayed is my delight in youth wit, behavior and wonder at the world. Teens possess a fresh wit, sometime too fresh, but it is a marvel. Leaders who can laugh with teens, and laugh at themselves are a huge asset to a ministry

**6. Willing and able to give time to teens.** Some of the best volunteers in my church would never be allowed to work with youth. The reason is that although they may have wonderful musical gifts, speaking ability, and athletic prowess they cannot commit to spending time with teens beyond our meetings. Teens need more than an

hour on Wednesday evening. Other potential leaders may work shift work, or be away weekends. They can have a role to play in my group but they cannot be part of our core leadership team.

## **Conclusion**

Junior high ministry is challenging yet rewarding. As we have seen it must be given a place of priority in the church rather than neglect. The developmental issues associated with puberty must be addressed with this age group if ministry is going to play a significant role in their lives.

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# **Chapter 7 Parents of Teens**

## **Introduction**

They used to scare me. I saw them as the opposition. The less they knew the better, I thought. Over time I have made a total reversal of this position. More and more I have come to recognize my role as the youth pastor to try to help parents disciple their children. Before I thought my goal was to correct 14 years of bad parenting, or somehow rescue teens from the apathy, complacency and materialism I saw in the adults of the church. I honestly believed that I loved the teens more than their parents did. I have had to repent of some very sinful attitudes towards parents. Part of that repentance is spending more time with them, allowing them to make greater input, and especially ministering to them as people who have many needs.

I don't I can take you as far down this road as I have come in this one lesson, but I hope that through the reading and the reflection on that reading you will begin with a much more healthy attitude and greater confidence that I did.

## The Biblical Background:

Read the following passages of scripture closely. In the Deuteronomy passage, answer these basic questions:

1. who is responsible is responsible for transmission of the commandments?
2. List the different contexts where these commands are to be taught?
3. Look at the list. Which of these contexts would the youth pastor have little access to?
4. Who is responsible for explaining the reasoning behind the rules
5. What is the actual content of the message being transmitted to children

Deut. 6:6ff and 6:20 ff

6These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.....

20In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" 21tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders--great and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. 24The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. 25And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

Also, examine this passage. 2Timothy 1:2-6

1. Who does Paul credit with the faith Timothy possesses?
2. What role did the church play in Timothy's life implied in this passage?
3. What role did Paul play in this man's life?

2Timothy 1:2-6

2To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 6For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

If you examine the scripture closely you will find that the responsibility to transmit the faith from one generation to the next rest upon the parents. According to the Old Testament, the teaching came most from the Dad's yet there is ample evidence that suggests that the mothers were also involved (see proverbs) Ministry takes place in the mundane things of life. Teaching occurs at all possible moments in the child's development. Lawrence Richards makes an excellent case for this in his "Theology of Children's Ministry" –He asserts that the Bible should be used to interpret life. In so doing parents breed a biblical mindset in their offspring. God scheduled the Jewish calendar to include many festivals, and celebrations that once again brought the teaching into the community and the home. Biblical teaching was never meant to be isolated to a twenty minute homily on a Friday night in between the worship and Mac Donalds

In the case of Timothy you see a partnering between the pastor, the church and the family to result in a life fully devoted to God. It is encouraging to see women (possible single moms?) were used of God to raise and nurture Timothy in the faith. This is the ideal!

Tragically, there is sometime conflict between the youth ministry and the home. Typically, youth pastors are between 20-25 young energetic relating well to teens but not as well to parents. This may be because they have not fully resolved issues with their own parents, or because of fear of authority figures. It is essential that youth workers address this fear. The best way to do that is through greater understanding.

If the youth pastor can truly grasp the plight of parents, they are on their way to seeing parents not as the enemy by allies in the battle for the souls of the teens. That is where we need to turn our attention

"The influence of parents upon the spiritual nurture of their children will exceed by far the influence of the youth pastor" (Senter, 1997)

## Understanding Parents

Part of the fear of working with parents is not seeing them as people with needs. When they become human and begin to have greater compassion for them then we are more able to relate to them. Here are some things to consider when you think about where parents are coming from:

### ***1.The weight of responsibility:***

Stress makes people do strange things. Here are some of the stressors in the lives of many parents of teens.

a) **aging parents** –the adult with teenagers in the home is also coming to grips with seeing the mortality of their own parents. As old as they may seem they are still someone's child. As their parents age they have to consider questions like, Should they live with us or should we put them in a home? How should I care for my surviving parent after the other is gone. How can I help with their health problems? What can I do if they need financial assistance?

b) **teenage children:** "Does it get easier when they get older" I asked my babysitters Dad as I changed my infants diaper. No. He said. When they are young a bottle and a dry diaper is all it takes to solve their problems. The bigger they get the bigger the problems get. I wish it was as easy as feeding and changing them. Nothing is simple any more. Nothing works no matter what we try. Parents at this stage of life feel like Taxi drivers, shuttling their kids around until they can drive. Arguments get

trickier as teens flex their communication and mental abilities to go 13 rounds with their kids.

c) **approaching retirement:** I doubt it is much different in the states, but most Canadians are far behind in saving for a comfortable retirement. Now that date looms closer and closer on the horizon with little hopes of that nest egg hatching. At the same time they may be sandwiched between the need to help their aging parents and sending their own kids to university. Parents can feel pressured from every direction.

## ***2. The onslaught of midlife crisis:***

We stereotype the middle aged man going out and getting a loud obnoxious sporty car, wearing shirts open to the navel, doused in cheap cologne, and wearing gold chains. But mid life (which may happen later if they are right about the life span of people today) is not a myth and has some profound implications for the fathers and mothers of adolescents. At the same time that parents feel their youth ebbing away – their teens are bursting with energy.

a) **physically** -health problems vs their kids health and vitality –Their kids do an all nighter and bounce back after sleeping to 3:00 PM. The parents are worn out by picking their kids up at mid night. The contrasts are repeated over and over again. I am sure it was a parent of a teenager who stated "Youth is wasted on the young!"

b) **sexually** -loss of appeal, potency, vs. their kids beauty, relationships, -Our culture worships youth in sick unnatural ways. The obsession with youth puts impossible pressure on women especially. Tension arises when the mom of a teenager is constantly reminded of her age.

c) **vocationally** -regrets over decisions -kids have many options what options do they have. Possibly the pressure parents place on their children to succeed stems from regrets in their lives. If only I had studied harder. I only I had applied my self or taken that opportunity....Teens still have these choices ahead of them and parents are so concerned that they choose wisely.

d) **emotionally** - empty nest syndrome begins reevaluation of the purpose of marriage. A close friend of mine sent his daughter to university this week. I assume the adjustment to this reality has been a part of that home for at least a year. For parents, the task of raising children has been central to their relationship. Suddenly the purpose for staying together has to be reevaluated. Preparing for this can put a serious strain on the marriage. What new expectations will my spouse have of me now? What will we talk about? Who can I argue with...?

e) **spiritually** -has my life meant anything-For the Christian parent a very real concern is what have I done with my life. Have I honored the Lord. Have I been a good example. (And boy, their kids will be more than happy to point out where they see inconsistencies!)

### **3. The overwhelming fears for their offspring:**

A recent newspaper survey of parents discovered that 4 out of ten parents "worry very much" about their teen age children while another "3 out of 10" worry quite a bit. And with good reason...The top ranking concerns for the parents were-

a) **violence** Even more so, with the shootings occurring in schools and gang violence in the inner cities parents are concerned for their young. Canadians were stunned by the beating and drowning of a teen in Surrey British Columbia by a gang of girls. Bullying has become a huge concern in the school systems of every province in Canada.

b) **failure:** When a child is in the womb all they want is for that child to be health and normal. All that ends at birth. Normal won't do any more. They want that kids to be exceptional. Sadly only fifty percent of teens in any group can be above average. Parents face very real fears that life just wont come together for their teen.

c) **loss:** Mothers Against Drunk Driving Exists –because parents are "madd" at the senseless loss of their loved ones. In Canada, the leading cause of death among teens is dangerous accidents. The second is suicide. But there are other ways to lose a teen. Run away youth continue to congregate on the streets squeegeeing for cash or finding even less desirable ways to make money.

### **4. The Five Cries of Parents: Merton Strommen**

In a classic study Merton Strommen isolated 5 desires or cries of parents. Being familiar with these will really help understand what parents want. Responsive ministries will respond to these cries...

a) **the cry to understand their child-** Lack of communication is a serious problem. When teens complain "Nobody understands me!" they may be correct. But it might not be every else who is to blame. Teens are not always able to explain what is going on in their hearts and in their heads. Parents are interested, but broaching the subject can feel like an interrogation that teens avoid more than a trip the dentist or final exams. Bibby and Posterski were able to determine that teens turn first to their friends for advice about their problems.

b) **the cry for a close family-**They want to spend time together. What is meal time like at your house. At mine, we don't have the tv on, don't pick up the phone and don't leave before everyone is finished. That is not the reality in my friends house that is dominated by the presence of 3 tornadoes named Jeff, Dan, and Ashley. Stereo tv and phone are in constant use. Not even the parents eat at the same time as they shuttle between, soccer practice, band rehearsal, and youth group, and part time job. They don't even go to church in one car because of plans for after church. Once they showed up at church in three cars. Not even the parents sat together as one was involved in the children's program. To ask any of them, "Are you a close family?" the answer would be "absolutely!"

c) **the cry to understand their role as a parent.** As first-time parents, my wife and I spent a lot of time in the emergency room, walk in clinic and pediatricians office. With our second we make sure there is a pulse and continue on with life. When our oldest becomes a teen, I expect we will be busy sitting in the pastors office

or sitting on a counselors couch. Being a parent of a toddler differs greatly from the way you parent a teen. Parents are confused as they move aside to make space for their teens friends. As they prepare to cut those apron strings and try to be more democratic, some parent lose their way. They are confused about how best to navigate these new waters. Some will become rigid and restrictive' others will be too permissive. Some parents will abdicate their responsibility entirely.

**d) the cry for moral behaviour**-Parents want their teens to respect their values: It seems that there is a wide gap between where the parents are at and their teens are going. Although younger teens may have similar values to their parents, parents are concerned that they will make the right choices, sometimes better choices than they made as a teen.

**e) the cry for a shared faith**-In many families parents and kids believe but do not pray together or discuss faith. In my family one of my personal struggles is to invite my wife and children into my spirituality and yet I must if we are to have a shared faith. One particularly successful Dad had each of the children lead devotions for the family once a week. Making time for God in that home was a regular daily habit.

## ***5. The feeling of inadequacy and the desire for help.***

Never is a parent as open for help than when they have that little infant, but the onset of the teenage years runs a close second! Invariably youth pastors have parents coming to them with the new battles they have not had to fight so far concerning clothing, lifestyle, or attitude issues. Non Christian parents will purchase books, attend seminars, or consult friends about some of the issues they are facing with their emerging teens.

## **General Principles for Working with Parents**

### ***1. Win their friendship:***

The youth worker should not assume that parents will automatically be welcoming. Depending on the track record of previous youth workers there may be some major obstacles to over come. The amount of energy expended in pursuing friendships with parents is well worth the effort.

a. **earn their respect** –Friendship is based on respect. This respect is earned when the youth worker conducts ministry in a professional, responsible manner. The trick is securing the respect of the parents and trust of the students. Sometimes these seem to be in conflict with one another but they do not need to be. It is not necessary to come across the parents as an adult and the kids as a goof ball. Consistency with parents and youth is necessary.

b. **respect their decisions** –When a student is grounded and the youth worker encourages them to defy their parents and come to a youth even (obeying God rather than man) a relationship is broken. If parents decide that a student is too young for a missions trip and the decision is second guessed by the youth ministry something is



lost. As the youth ministry respects the decisions of parents and actively supports these decisions the vision and goal of the youth ministry will be respected.

c. **do not betray confidences** –If a parent confides in me that he is leaving his wife I cannot tell anyone. Betraying a parent's confidence is a breach of trust. It is a matter of pastoral ethics and in some cases can bring on a law suit. When parents know that they can trust in the smaller things then they may be more open about the bigger things in their life. A new youth worker may be tested by parents to see where their loyalty lies. If a parent tells me that I should

d. **do not keep secrets from them:** This is a tricky one. Youth parents are often asked, "Promise you won't tell..." And as much as I want students to open up to me I never promise this carte blanche. On the other hand if it gets out that I told their parents something that they did not want discovered and word gets out to the youth group the group will not trust me any more. Normally I have to tell a youth that they can tell me anything but if it puts them or someone else in danger then we must agree on how we will tell the parents together. On the other hand if it is discovered that the youth pastor was aware that a student was doing drugs, or sleeping with their boyfriend the youth pastor's credibility will be put into question.

e. **consider their opinions** –As a youth expert who is closer to the age of the students and understands all things "youthy" the youth worker may disregard the opinions of parents. Veteran youth pastors know better. They know that the parents perspective may be as good or better than their own. They know that every complaint, suggestion, or word of advise from a parent has an ounce of wisdom in it. If nothing else it provides on parents views on a situation. This information can be very valuable. How you deal with parental concern or advise will indicate your responsiveness to them.

f. **design programs that respect family time** –In the hurricane that is "family life" in north America time together is taken at a premium. Although MTV can operate oblivious to this in their programming, the local church cannot. Questions to consider are: How many nights out a week are demanding of our students? How many weekends a year do we expect of teens? How can we devise events that parents and teens would want to be part of ?

g. **act as an advocate on behalf of parents.** As much as teens need advocates in society, so do parents. The average teenage dad is an incompetent fool who only stumbles across wisdom across the back fence. The cartoon Mom is a shrieking shrew. Teens should hear from time to time how the youth ministry respects, appreciates, even admires parents of teens.

## ***2. Listen to Parents***

a. **arrange formal and informal meetings:** For some youth workers I have just suggested that they organize their worst nightmare. Reluctance to work with parents however bodes poorly for a youth ministry. Effective youth ministries are not afraid of parents opinions. On the contrary, they welcome them.

b. **acknowledge them when calling, or picking up kids.** This is so obvious, that is embarrassing that it requires mentioning. Sadly youth pastors are notorious for acting like teens on the phone and are some times mistaken for them. I keep all the parents names on file with the students and try to remember which parent they are with that week or weekend if the parents are separated. Talking to the parent using their first name communicates equality, confidence, and professionalism.

c. **home visitation** –Never show up unannounced but do make home visits. Set a goal to visit each student in their home in a year. If you have four kids you could be done in a month. A home visit may make the parents more uncomfortable than you but it also takes you out of your comfort zone to theirs. Don't go to the house expecting to have quality time with the youth. Most likely the parents will dominate your time. Go to visit with them. Our youth ministry made special home visits with all of the students coming up to the youth ministry from the Sunday School. It was an excellent approach to meeting new students, but more so parents who were new to the youth program.

d. **fellowship with them at church:** Does your church have a coffee time? Many are starting to. Before or after church a good youth worker tries to be available to parents and teens. If you are constantly surrounded by a cloud of teens it is likely that parents will not interrupt. It is important to move out and initiate conversation with adults.

e. **be slow to give advice, listen uncritically:** No one likes to receive unsolicited advice, but boy do we love to offer it to others! Even if you have teenage children, and most youth pastors do not, you are not in any place to criticize how a parent is doing his or her job. Encouragement, empathy, respect –these things foster a much better result than judging or criticizing.

f. **empathize with their fears:** Do you have any phobias? Imagine how silly they seem to others who have no fears. Parents have many fears for the young people in their home. Mocking parents is one of the fastest ways to find yourself alienated from the very people you have come to serve. While beginning to understand their fears, weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice

### ***3. Respond Creatively to the five cries***

a. **help parents understand their teens** –Seminars and forums open the lines of communication. Always make it interactive. Newsletters that focus on teen issues, book reviews, and movie ratings will be gratefully accepted by parents

b. **help build close families:**

-do not compete with parents – In the hope of building relationships with teens sponsors or leaders can compete for the affections of young people.

This is not fair to parents. It is essential to work with the parents. Make parents look good in the eyes of their teens.

- be sensitive to family time in programming –As mentioned above over programming for kids is an assault on the family. Don't plan events on times that should be family times, even if the teens in your group say that their family will not be doing anything special.

- give advance notice to parents of activities –Many parents have to plan their vacations up to a year in advance. For parents the time that their son or daughter will go on vacation with them is limited. If you let parents know when you are running your summer mission trip or summer camp a year in advance then parents will be able to work with you on these dates.

- include parents in programming. A parents committee to help provide input will help get the parents perspective.

**c. help parents understand themselves:**

- parent effectiveness training –these kind of parenting classes work much better for children, but the parents of junior high students may be open as well to learning some techniques or having their questions addressed. In our church a couple ran a bible study called positive parenting with wonderful results!

- promote parenting seminars: Topics may include discipline, boundaries, motivating teens, or some of the issues that teens are facing like depression, suicide and violence.

- adult Bible studies for parents of adolescents. Parents in the trenches (Pitts) is a ministry at my church. It is run by parents of teenagers for parents of teenagers. As an adult elective it is the most popular that our church offers.

- support groups for parents of teens (moms and dots) –A group of moms at my last church was very concerned about the youth ministry when I first arrived on the scene. Rather than criticize me or the former youth pastor one mom decided to hold prayer meetings in her home to pray for the teens in our church and for me! I was part of a prayer group of Dads of young children. These kinds of groups can be excellent to meet other parents in the stage of life and to find mutual support.

**d. promote reasonable moral standards for parents and youth.**

- have parents compare standards with other parents: Parents don't like being told what to do but can be open to hear what others are doing. In parenting workshops I have found this to be one of the parts the parents enjoy most.

- keep parents aware of what you are teaching youth –One way that parents can be part of the ministry and reinforce what is being taught is to be made aware of the teaching topics and your goals a month in advance. The monthly calendar should also communicate some of your monthly teaching topics.

- get a clear picture of the values parents are trying to instill in youth. There is only one way to get this picture and that means sitting down with couples

in the congregation to find out what the consensus was. I was surprised to find out that a number of the parents in my congregation opposed TV entirely and had an “only news” policy. Some families had no TV at all. Can you imagine the conflict raised when I incorporated recent video release clips in my messages?

**e. Help parents and teens share their faith with one another:**

-intergenerational activities –it is amazing how some of the ethnic congregations are able to involve youth in with the adults. In my area most of the Korean churches have picnics every Sunday after church. One of the favorite family events is a kind of scavenger hunt. Even the youth look forward to participating with their parents. On New Years day is also common to get together at the church and have a games day where the youth and adults participate together.

-youth involvement with the adults. Smaller congregations with no specific youth ministry sometimes incorporate young people in the life of the church, ushering, leading in prayer, scripture reading, being members of the choir, playing in the band, or helping with the sound. Parents love to see their children involved and sense of worshiping together meets a very real need.

-family devotions encouraged, assisted and promoted. It is discouraging for parents to be told to establish a family altar, devotional time, or home service if they are not given the help and resources to launch one. Some churches have used a 50 day spiritual adventure to encourage parents and students to study the same material. The study guides and suggestion help parents get one step closer to studying the bible together as a family.

#### ***4. Respond Positively and Professionally to Conflict and Criticism***

When you are criticized the natural reaction is fight or flight. Either you will defend your ministry or you will withdraw. Neither of these approaches are helpful. Here is a brief outline of a more effective way of dealing with opposition.

a. **continue communicating compassion and concern.** Our first reaction could be to freeze up. Our body language may communicate hostility. Keep the big picture in mind and it is less likely you will see the conflict in adversarial terms.

b. **accept the resentment without formulating a defense** –As Stephen Covey puts it, seek first to understand then to be understood. Really hear what is being said even if the person is completely mistaken. Here their side in its entirety. Remember that acceptance is not agreement.

c. **share concerns that you can agree on -find the common ground.** “I am so glad that you are so concerned about your child’s spiritual growth, I feel like we are on the same page.” Communicating this will show them what the real issue is. Always assume that they want the very best for their child.

d. **reflect their emotions by repeating them back in your own words.** “So what you are saying is that you are angry at me because your child is not attending the youth ministry? Have I got it right?” Sometimes just hearing how absurd their complaint is can deflate the situation. On the other hand if you have missed the point of their complaint or if there is some underlying reason for the anger it is more likely that you will get to the real problem.

e. **accept responsibility for any mistakes, or weaknesses admit**

**vulnerability:** Willingness to see our responsibility will help reduce the anger in a parent. Part of their confrontation is helping you to understand how you have hurt them or their child. That was not your intention but it may have been the result. What is needed is to admit when we are wrong and to try to make peace. This is for the higher good of the youth ministry and the church. At the same time we do not take responsibility for everything, just our role in the conflict.

f. **confirm willingness to end the conflict with a verbal agreement** “So if I make sure that the dates of our events for next year are in our yearly calendar and our monthly news letter, that is what you are looking for?” Sometimes you have to agree to disagree. You let them know that you have respect for them as a person but you will continue to use recreational times in your youth ministry because it is necessary for building community.

g. **end meeting in prayer for the greater needs of the youth.** Ultimately you would hope they came because they are deeply concerned for the young people in their home. Don’t use prayer as a way of skirting the issue or reasserting your point of view. Genuinely seek the highest good and that God’s will will be done.

## Conclusion

Good youth ministry means building strong godly families. Too often youth ministries function as an alternative to families or in direct opposition to them. Helping parents in their role may be the best thing youth ministers can do to achieve lasting fruit in the ministry.

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# Chapter 8 Student and Adult Leaders

## Introduction

just got off the phone with Randy and my head is echoing with the excitement in his voice! "Ron I have 59 adult leaders on board for the fall. The programs are looking better than every before. But the best thing is that we can finally care for our 200

Junior Highs! I was going crazy last year and we still weren't keeping up with even the absentees.. I really think things are going to be different."

Even as Jesus was discipling his followers he was training them to serve others. Some people have said that the key to MacDonald's success is that part of the training of every new employee is the idea that they will be training others very soon.

I know you must be nodding your head in agreement, but partly you are wondering how do you get these people on board and how to you train them to be affective. Hopefully at then end of this unit you will be better prepared to address both of these concerns.

## **The need for leaders**

As you most certainly know, you cannot do youth ministry alone. Effective youth ministries share the leadership. I can remember clearly the words of my mentor at the end of my one year youth ministry internship "Ron, the effectiveness of your ministry will be limited by your ability to recruit and train volunteers." (Dr. John Wilkinson 1990) These words resound in my head every time that I plan a big event and few kids turn out, or when I find myself cleaning up after every one has gone home.

## **Student Leaders**

I have found that a great team of student leaders is effective for many reasons:

1. When students get involved they grow. Remember the pyramid or the funnel. There are teens who are ready to minister to the lost and to the group. The challenge of leadership (servant leadership that is) causes them to rise to the challenge or to be ready to learn. I have often challenged kids to be part of our ministry team when they showed an eagerness to serve even though their confidence was low
2. When students are part of the leadership they care about what is going on. Ownership is crucial to an effective youth ministry. I have seen some groups where the adult leaders are having a much better time than the teens. I have also thought I was doing my group a big favor by doing every thing. Bad move. When youth are part of the decision making process, there is a commitment that cannot be bought by trying to peddle your vision every week. In fact the best way to fuel a vision is to let the teens begin to run with it. I am convinced that we are to equip teens to do youth ministry (application of Ephesians 4:11-13)
3. When students are committed to ministry they bring their friends. A crowd draws a crowd. Teens attend mostly because to the interaction they can have with friends. If you have a committed leadership team of eight or nine teens, at least the room won't be empty. Likely each of them has a few friends who will be there as well. One of the deadly things that can happen to a group is when no one will commit to the activities. The mentality among many teens is "I'm not going if you are not going." When your ministry team has signed up for the event already, they motivate the rest of the group to get on board.
4. When student ministers are part of the planning you make better decisions. It may take longer to arrive at a decision but if your team is in touch with the where teens are at, they will know whether the idea will bomb, or the rest of the group will be at a birthday party that night, or that everyone has decided to go to the youth group a

mile away because they are giving out free pizza this week. The insights into youth culture, or the slight changes that they can suggest can make all the difference. There is no doubt in my mind that the best outreaches we have ever done were mostly run by teens; their ideas, decorations, promotion, even presentation of the gospel. In fact the two most useful things I did at one outreach event was to unlock the doors and record the names of the kids who prayed with their friends to accept Christ.

5. When students share the ministry you can focus on the things that only you can do. What is it that only you can do? Or to ask the question another way --what are you doing that someone else can do? I am not saying that we dump all of the unpleasant tedious tasks of ministry on people who are eager to be used. What I am saying is that when you do something that someone else could or should be doing, you rob them of the opportunity to serve and you neglect the higher calling. While coordinating a National Evangelistic Campaign in Taiwan I found myself collating 50 promotional packages. It struck me that this was a job for a machine, not a human. I didn't even run the copies over to the printers, someone else was going. That gave me the necessary time to make bookings, and recruit pastors to participate. No one can take your responsibility to pray from you, or to cast vision, or to some of the preaching or counseling. But over time you should probably be able to turn more and more of your ministry over to others, who in time will train others and so on.

With this in mind I submit to you some training materials that I have used with my student and adult leaders. Please read all of it thoroughly and begin to think through how you would train leaders to lead with you.

## **Training Leaders**

This is a training program for student and adult leaders. Read it carefully to determine the qualities of leaders, their roles in the group, and the expectations placed on them.

## **Salt –Characteristics of a Leadership Team**

Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Salt does three things: 1. It preserves 2. It enhances the flavour 3 It creates thirst.

As SALT we can fulfill the same purposes in the lives of youth

### **1. Preservation**

- we create a safe environment for youth

-we create a healthy environment for youth

-we become part of their life 1 Thessalonians 2:8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

How can we be used in preservation at our meetings? How can we be used in preservation during the week days?

## **2. Flavour**

"Variety is the spice of life" -a variety of leaders connect with a cross section of kids in the community

-Enhancing -means to bring out the best. By loving and believing in youth we will bring out the best in them We must see the potential of every youth. We must accept every student. We must believe that they are God's kids. We need to treat every student with respect

-We lose our flavour when we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work through us -Our flavour comes from God -"We are like stain glass windows, it is the light of the son that brings out the colours" Keith Green

If students were watching you at a meeting what evidence of flavour would they see?  
What are some ways that we can allow God to bring out the flavour in our lives?  
What are some very do able things that we can put in practice each week to bring out the flavour in the live of our members?

## **3. Thirst**

we don't push students we draw them

-we need to "salt" students -love, listening, testimonies...

-there must be something about our quality of life that they desire

-as they recognize our hunger and thirst for God -they will develop a similar appetite

What do we have in Christ that teens would want? What can we do to make students thirsty for more of God at our meetings? What can we do through out the week to make students thirsty for more of God?

## **3 Levels of Involvement**

All levels of involvement are essential to the effectiveness of the youth ministry. All leaders are of ultimate value regardless of their role. No one is expendable!

A. Support Team B. Program Team C. Ministry Team

### **A. Support Team**

- People with special skills or abilities who are strongly supportive of the youth ministry, web page, office help, music, video, baby sitting
- people able to commit short periods of time to a youth event, or a program - chaperone, drivers, builders, painters, registration, catering
- behind the scenes person who is not comfortable or confident with direct contact with teens (must be congenial, respectful of students, non judgmental, supportive..)
- has limited time to offer the ministry
- Invited but not expected to be at Salt Meetings

### **B. Program Team**

- Regular attendance and involvement in at least one youth program per week



- Responsible for some elements of that program (eg Sunday Morning Live) and all events connected with it (eg. Retreats, Socials, Rallies, Conventions)
- Responsible as a team member to arrive early and stay late (or until parents pick up the students up -involvement in setup clean up, crowd control, promotion, enthusiasm
- Responsible to mix with students, greet new comers, and pitch in wherever necessary or possible.
- Responsible to enthusiastically support the programs, the church and the leadership
- Challenged to offer 30 Minutes a week beyond the program involvement

### ***C. Ministry Team***

- All of the program team responsibilities
- Responsible to a group of young people, either formally through small groups or informally through relationships
- To take the responsibility to pray daily for those students
- To develop friendships with students, through phone calls, letters, notes, meetings, interaction after youth meetings, email, home visits.

## **Reflection on Leadership**

Here are some important questions for all leaders and perspective leaders to consider:

What is your current role in the youth ministry?

Which responsibilities do you find the most challenging in the list above?

Which of the responsibilities above do you find the most rewarding?

List a few names of people that you see fitting into the different categories about.

## **Key Qualities of Leaders**

### ***Responsible***

The greatest disappointment in ministry is when leaders do not follow through with their commitment or neglect their responsibilities. Everyone suffers when this happens. The trust relationship is broken and pastors are reluctant to delegate any meaningful kind of project. The need for people to run with the ball and not drop it is essential. It is much better to have a few leaders who can be counted on, than a many that are unreliable.

### ***Available***

Some of the best leaders are a poor fit to youth ministry because they are over committed. Sports, music, part time jobs, dating relationship and the like disqualify some student leaders from leadership in any meaningful capacity. In the same way adult leaders who have irregular attendance patterns cannot be counted on. Teens

spell love t-I-m-e ..which shows they need to learn how to spell or it means that they need consistent leadership, week in and week out.

### ***Faithful***

Loyalty is one word that comes to mind here. Is the leader loyal to God, our church and the youth ministry? The leader must be supportive of the pastor, the program, and the church. Faithfulness can be partly measured by attendance. Sporadic attendance patterns can sometimes show that leadership is not a priority.

### ***Teachable***

Every Pastor is different. It is essential that the leadership team is unified and therefore the members must be open to learn new ways of doing things. Also, because leaders need to grow too, it is the Youth Pastor's responsibility to nurture the leaders. They need to be open to encouragement and challenges. Training is also essential so that the team functions as a team,

## **Key Leadership Principles**

### ***The Ten Minute Rule***

The atmosphere must be set in the room ten minutes before the first student arrives. This means that the lighting, music, activities, prayers, chairs, are all in place, and the leaders are prepared to meet with students. Each student should be greeted as soon as they step on the property. Students who arrive early should be blessed for doing so, not penalized for showing up early by having to set up chairs or put up with chaos, or ignored as leaders chat with one another.

### ***The Scatter Principle***

"Like Salt out of the salt shaker"

It is always a lot easier to hang out with your friends, or fellowship with other leaders. The Scatter Principle demands that we infiltrate the ranks. We sit with the kids and not with each other. During worship, refreshments, or sports no two leaders should be together. Leaders are cannot become spectator we must be participants. The temptation to hang out at the back where we feel comfortable maybe very real. Boldness may be required to move out and get a seat. Only a few people at the back are required for greeting and crowd control.

### ***The Wal-Mart Law***(also known as the ten foot rule)

Rumor has it that the original law for Wal-Mart employees was that any shopper within a ten foot radius of a worker had to receive a warm smile and be asked if they could be assisted in any way. Applied to our group every leader should make an effort to greet every teen with warm and sensitivity. Some team members will need to be in the halls.

### ***Plan to Protect***

The key ingredient here is that all adult leaders must take the plan to protect. One rule of thumb with the plan is that no leader is alone with minor, in a car, room, or almost any place without written permission. Many of the students are aware of this, but not all of them. Do not leave situations up to the discretion of the student.

## ***The Team Ethic***

"United we stand, divided we fall and if we ever have our backs against the wall, we'll be together .." -some song from the seventies

When we succeed, we succeed together -when we fail...

We have different roles but everyone's role is just as important. If anyone is away we all suffer. It is essential that we are all there. Synergy happens on a good team, that is, the group is better than the sum of the parts. We can accomplish much more as a group than as a collection of individuals. (Join the Borg be assimilated!)

## ***The High Road Rule***

Complaints and criticism, sarcastic responses, and cutting comments kill the morale in a group faster than a bout of the Hong Kong flu! We must determine to take the high road at all times. My blood type is B+ (be positive) That is the high road to good morale. If it rains on a trip don't mention the rain. If someone drops the ball don't mention it. Don't judge, don't condemn, don't rebuke. There are times for these things, but they are not Friday, Wednesday or Sunday. The complaint department is on the 50th floor -Please take the stairs to your left. Remember not critters (criticism) of the program, the teens, or other leaders. Save them for the evaluation times.

## ***The Law of Expectations***

"We can count the apples on a tree. God can count the apples in a seed."

Studies in education have proven that students live up (or down) to the expectations that their teachers have of them. Labeling kids is so negative because it limits their potential, in our minds and in reality. Remember we were created in the image of God. We are his offspring -that should raise our expectations somewhat. Also don't underestimate God's incredible transformational power in our lives. Don't limit what God can do in their lives or yours.

## **Finding and Keeping Volunteers**

1. Always be promoting and recruiting: There can be a high turnover of youth ministry volunteers. Not only this, but if the ministry grows as it should, new leaders will need to be added.
2. Run leadership training seminars: one way to meet keen individuals in your community or church is to be involved in leadership training. Many churches use programs like leadership 101 to train volunteers. In this process you can spot who might work well with youth.
3. Find out who the youth would want as leaders: When youth choose a volunteer, you have overcome the biggest obstacle in recruiting. Most people think that the youth would not want them around. If you can go to them and tell them that the youth chose them they are almost signed on!
4. Create 3 levels of commitment: Since some people cannot be there all the time, if you create three levels of involvement, your leaders who are good at relational ministry can be freed up to spend time with kids.

Sometime: these people can drive for events, bring in a snack once a month or help out when you do outreaches as a bouncer.

Part time: these people may be able to come twice a month on a regular basis but not every week. They can be on a rotation to set up chairs, do decorations, or other responsibilities depending on their gift set.

All the time: these are your ministry team people who are at every meeting retreat, and event. They need to become trained in relational ministry

5. Publicly acknowledge workers: one way to make sure that you hold on to leaders is that they are publicly acknowledged. You can have a commissioning service each year praying for their ministry. Awards could be given at a banquet for volunteers each year.

6. Allow for positive evaluation. Leaders need feed back on how well they are doing. Something in writing will be very valuable to a volunteer. If you recognize relational ministry that they have done you send the message that this is the kind of thing we appreciate in our volunteers.

7. Survey the congregation for potential workers; Each year I send out a volunteer survey to determine who may have skills that could benefit the youth ministry. It is remarkable to see the gifts available in one congregation that would bless a youth ministry.

8. Develop standards and covenants for volunteers. If there are no standards to uphold leaders feel like anyone could do what they are doing. Their attendance could drop off. Have leaders sign an agreement makes a big difference in their level of commitment to the ministry.

9. Invite potential workers to successful events: Let potential leaders get their feet wet rather than immersing them in something they cannot get out of. Letting them see the ministry when it is running well might draw them to be part of what you are doing.

10. Never say that anyone can do it or that it is not difficult -stress the challenge. Youth ministry is challenging. Your workers will be offended if they know that you are going around saying that it is easy and anyone can do it.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Leaders**

These may be different for different ministries. Each of the following are particular to a Sunday School class and a Youth Ministry meeting:

### ***Ministry Team***

Arrive at 9:30 Sunday Morning -for prayer and preparation -greet early arrivers

Lead discussion with a group of junior high students, from the church and from the bus ministry

Members of the ministry team need to be part of all planning and training times.

Ministry: Follow up on students with phone calls, letters, note, email, visits

One way to spell ministry is the following:

M e e t all students at your table

I nteract with the people at your table, get them talking

N ew people: Make sure that regulars meet them

I nvite them to the next program, event etc. (The Gap, Growth Groups, etc.)

S ign in the students at your table for attendance and accurate follow up

Touch someone with an appropriate welcoming, gentle handshake or side hug

R espond to noise or distractions discreetly during the message in order to eliminate it

Y es message: Communicate your excitement over a student presence and the program

### ***Program Team***

Arrive at 9:30 for interaction, prayer, setup, last minute preparations

Help out with the opening time or other details

Sit in with one of the groups as a helper

***Support People***—can be involved in a number of different ways.

-drive bus?

-help with snack

-special lunches

-music

-registration

## **Friday Night Youth Meeting**

### ***Ministry Team***

· Arrive at 6:30 every week or earlier if involved with music or set up

· Implement ministry acrostic above.

· Develop relationships with a group of teens follow up during the week. Call them to promote activities or informal activities (This may be done through huddles or a draft pick of group members)

· Participate fully in worship, or other aspects of the program as required, ie. Ice breakers, refreshments, prayer times, crowd control, gym sports, car pool to after gap event.

· Stick around after ward to interact, wait with teens for parents to arrive

· Need to participate in all meetings and training times

### ***Program Team***

- -Arrive early every week to fulfill responsibility in the program that night, attendance, registration, Gap Store, refreshments, promotion, decoration, sound, lighting, music, video, pictures, greeters, sports set up, games,
- Be part of one of the various committees:
- Music, drama, Retreat, Christmas Cam, Banquet, Promotion, Events, Nursery, Strategic Acts of Kindness

### ***Support Team***

- occasional involvement as necessary -special events, fundraisers, meals, refreshments, sleepovers, prayer support, driving, equipment, special speakers, other

## **Small Groups**

### ***Ministry Team***

- Take responsibility for the nurture of the group members
- Prepare study, if preparation is involved
- Lead discussions, help students to interact with each other
- Call all absent students after missing a meeting
- Keep records of attendance and submit them to Ron
- Train an assistant leader who will be able to lead a group of their own
- Seek to grow and split the group in a year.
- Send cards, letters notes etc to members to encourage them
- Develop meaningful friendships with the group members
- Lead one social activity with the group per season.
- Lead your group in the area of acts of kindness.
- Need to be part of all meetings and training times

### ***Program Team***

- Arrive each week at 6:30 pm
- Be involved in greeting, setup, open session, music, administration, promotion, games, acts of kindness...
- Assist in one group
- Interact with students

### ***Support Team***

- Occasional involvement based on need of the program and skills of the individual

## **Conclusion**

Volunteers are the back bone to any church. Effective youth ministries recruit, train, utilize, and retain, student and adult leaders. Leaders should be faithful, available, responsible and teachable. Different levels of commitment ranging from deeply committed to occasional help should all be considered.

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## Chapter 9 A Youth Worker's Self Test

John Maxwell, Christian Leadership expert says that “ministry rises and falls with leadership. So far in this book we have looked at many things a leader will do when it comes to working with parents, teens and leaders. Now it is time to look beyond what a leaders should do to an analysis of what a youth worker should know.

Below is a competency analysis that I have developed and revised numerous times with the help of committees of very capable youth pastors. I encourage you to take this test and complete the self evaluation questions at the end of the questions. Afterward it would be good to consider, “Where do I go from here?”

### Self Evaluation Assignment

The purpose of this activity is to establish areas for further study. The list is as comprehensive as possible covering a wide variety of facets of ministry. Being strong in all the areas below does not guarantee success but this should be an indication of how well equipped the potential youth pastor is for the ministry.

Place the correct number in the box that best rates your ability, competence, and confidence in the area listed below. 1 is lowest (strongly disagree) 2 disagree 3 agree and 4 is highest (strongly agree)

Personal Devotional Life	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
	1	2	3	4
1. I have developed a very strong consistent devotional life and hold to it in all situations				
2. I have learned to hear the voice of God in all decisions and am led by the Holy Spirit daily.				
3. I am aware of my spiritual gifts and practice them effectively in the body of Christ.				
4. I have come to the place in my spiritual life where I possess all the fruit of the Holy Spirit.				
5. I understand the dynamics of intercession and see the answers to prayer on a regular basis.				
6. I have confidence in sharing my faith and leading others to salvation.				
7. I feel confident in my relationship with Christ as a model for other Christians to follow				



8. I have come to a place where I am dead to my own will and only desire the will of God				
9. I am living a victorious Christian life overcoming sin, temptations, and the sinful nature.				
10. I am aware of the Biblical qualifications for pastors and I am living up to them.				
total for area				

Life Management Skills	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
	1	2	3	4
1. I am aware of how I react to stress and have a healthy strategy for dealing with it.				
2. I am a self starter and know how to set personal goals and achieve them				
3. I do not procrastinate but accomplish tasks early				
4. I use principles of time management to make effective use of time.				
5. I use a day timer or other system of appointment calendar and always keep my appointments				
6. I have a personal budget and stick to it minimizing debt and using money for the kingdom				
7. I maintain a high level of motivation despite circumstances in life				
8. I have disciplined myself to respect every person I meet regardless of how they treat me				
9. I have developed a servants attitude where no task is below me, and never complain				
10. I have developed a deep loyalty to my supervisors and colleagues.				
total for area				
Programming				
1. I have clear rules in my mind for youth group behavior at meetings, events and retreats.				
2. I have a definite strategy for analyzing youth group needs				
3. I know how to select leaders and build a leadership team for the youth group				
4. I know how to deal with rebels and disruptive members of the youth group.				
5. I have a clear understanding of how to inspire a group				
6. I know how to seek God to receive and develop a vision for a ministry				
7. I know how to get love flowing in a				

youth group so that all members feel loved and accepted.				
8. I know how to gain the trust and respect of the individuals in the youth group				
9. I know how to get teens on fire for God and desiring to serve God				
10. I understand how youth groups become complacent and how to motivate a group.				
total for area				
Youth Ministry Management	1	2	3	4
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. I know how to organize youth group records and keep track of birthdays, and attendance				
2. I am able to write and mail out correspondence to youth and their parents				
3. I can design a balanced yearly youth program which accomplishes the vision God has provided				
4. I can calculate a yearly budget and maintain a set of books keeping track of expenditures.				
5. I am aware of the paper work and permits necessary for running events outside the church				
6. I can design brochures for youth group activities which include a waiver form for injuries				
7. I am comfortable with chairing committees, and delegating responsibilities				
8. I can develop a program of visitation and follow it				
9. I have a list of resource people and speakers available for special event, retreats etc.				
10. I have basic computer skills for managing a data base, writing form letters and reports				
total for area				
Parent Ministry				
1. I am confident with running a parents meeting				
2. I am aware of resources for helping parents with their adolescent youth				
3. I have an understanding of how to run a family counseling session with parents and youth				
4. I have the understanding and ability to gain the trust and respect of the parents				
5. I have a strategy for recruiting and				

training adult volunteers for youth ministry				
6. I know how to build a relationship with the board earning their trust.				
7. I have a positive strategy for dealing with criticism from parents and youth				
8. I know how to make powerful presentations to the adults and board to get their support				
9. I know how to illicit the prayer support of certain adults and how to keep them motivated				
10. I am aware of a number of activities to strengthen bonds between youth and adults				
total for area				

<b>Theology</b>	1	2	3	4
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. I am clear on soteriology and how it relates to youth ministry, age of accountability, etc.				
2. I understand what is the unpardonable sin and how it is committed.				
3. I know how to counsel someone concerning the assurance of their salvation				
4 I can clearly explain the theological significance of baptism in water to Jr. Highs				
5. I can apply my Christology to youth ministry explaining it in terms they can understand				
6. I can address all questions concerning the incarnation satisfy a university students doubts				
7. I can explain and defend, the trinity, vicarious atonement, and bodily resurrection				
8. I have a clear understanding of prophecy and a sequence of eschatological events				
9. I understand the problem of theodicy and can account for God's goodness and mans suffering				
10. I can explain a Christian system of cosmology and address the theory of evolution				
11. I can explain the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.				
12. I can defend the reliability of the Bible and clearly explain the process of canonization				
13. I can provide an overview of Church history and can trace our roots back to the early church				
14. I understand the basic beliefs of the major cults and religions and can explain				

why Jesus is the only way to see heaven.				
15. I have an understanding of demonology and spiritual warfare and can explain them				
<b>total for area</b>				

<b>Youth Development and Junior High Ministry</b>				
	1	2	3	4
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. I am aware of and can explain the changes that occur during puberty				
2. I can give Junior Highs a strategy for avoiding inferiority and peer pressure				
3. I am aware of the developmental tasks Junior High students face				
4. I am aware of the cognitive abilities of Junior Highs and can teach accordingly				
5. I am aware of resources to help parents nurture their Junior High youth.				
6. I am aware of the most effective leadership style for Junior High ministry.				
7. I have a list of resources for Junior high activities				
8. I have a strategy for reaching and discipling Junior High youth.				
9. I am aware of positive strategies to maintain discipline while keeping motivation high				
10. I have a strategy for building unity, fostering love, and a positive group image with Junior Highs				
<b>total for area</b>				
<b>Young Adult Ministry</b>				
1. I can explain the process of faith development from early to late adolescence				
2. I can create programming that addresses the developmental tasks of late adolescents				
3. I am aware of a program of premarital counseling for late adolescents				
4. I can build a positive leadership team for a young adults ministry				
5. I can tailor messages delivered to early, middle, and late adolescents				
6. I understand the basics of vocational counseling and helping people find the will of God				
7. I know what inspires young adults today to be part of a group and can implement it in ministry				
8. I can list the major issues that young adults grapple with and can respond to				

each biblically				
9. I understand how to integrate young adults into the life in the church and remain as members				
10. I have a strategy for reaching young adults outside of the church and discipling them				
<b>total for area</b>				

<b>Biblical and Cultural Issues</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. I have a biblical response to issues of injustice in the world, racism, oppression, sexism.				
2. I have a clearly formulated biblical theology of youth ministry that I can explain to others				
3. I have a biblical responses to alternative lifestyles and the definition of what is a family				
4. I have a biblical response to abortion, and euthanasia				
5. I have a biblical understanding of what constitutes sexual immorality				
6. I have a biblical approach to ethics in the work place				
7. I can explain my standards of holiness concerning music, entertainment and media choices				
8. I know how to help young people set their own biblical values and priorities in this world				
9. I have a biblical approach to the environment, and stewardship of creation				
10. I can share a biblical understanding of our responsibility to the poor, orphans, elderly, etc.				
11. I can help young people set standards for dating				
12. I can help young people understand the power of peer pressure and be able to resist it				
13. I understand and can explain the power and danger of materialism for young people				
14. I can define idolatry as it relates to youth today and help youth to break free from it				
15. I can explain the different forms of substance abuse help teens to reject them all				
<b>total for area</b>				
<b>Campus Ministry</b>				

1. I am aware of the laws concerning access to Campuses for the purpose of ministry.				
2. I have a strategy for gaining access to a local campus and making positive contacts.				
3. I have a strategy for helping Jr. High, Senior H, and young adults begin Christian groups on campus				
4. I have a training program for making youth and young adults effective witnesses				
5. I have a workable follow-up plan to use with new converts, and recent recommitments				
<b>total for area</b>				

<b>Communication</b>	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1. I understand what a Bible learning activity is and can use it effectively in discovery learning.				
2. I am proficient at leading small group discussions.				
3. I am can develop inductive and deductive bible studies				
4. I understand the difference preaching to junior high youth, senior high youth and adults.				
5. I can preach narrative, expository, and inductive messages.				
6. I can make effective use of Power Point and other audio visuals in communication to youth or adults				
7. I can develop a newsletter or monthly calendar for youth and their parents				
8. I can research and present a seminar for parents or teens on a ministry related or social issue.				
9. I can send and receive emails.				
10. I understand the basics of web and can determine what should be on our youth web site.				
<b>total for area</b>				
<b>Leadership</b>	1	2	3	4
1. Can differentiate between servant leadership and domineering leadership.				
2. I understand the ethical dimension of leadership and refuse to abuse the power of authority				
3. I can recognize the qualities of a good youth leader				
4. I have a plan for recruiting and retaining youth volunteers				

5.I understand my leadership style and am aware which leadership style works best with each situation.				
6.I understand my usual response to conflict and have a plan for dealing with it constructively.				
7.I have a plan for training student and adult leaders				
8.I understand a biblical approach to church discipline and have a plan for bringing a student or leader to a place of restoration.				
9.I am comfortable with the role of leader and understand the biblical responsibilities of a leader.				
10. I have a plan for my ongoing development as a leader.				
<b>total for area</b>				

## Analysis

Please take another sheet of paper or type your answers into a document on your computer.

Go back now and add up your scores in each area.

In your analysis pick your strongest and weakest areas.

Now go over the whole survey which area did you score highest on?

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Which area did your score lowest on?

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Write down how you can improve on your areas of weakness.

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List below areas in youth ministry that you feel you need to be better trained in so that you can be more effective.

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List Topics that you feel you need to learn in to have a fuller understanding of youth ministry.

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Set goals now concerning how you will get more training to be more confident in these areas of ministry. Include books you plan to read and conferences or courses that you plan to attend.

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## Final Thoughts

### Challenges and Possibilities

Adolescence has been described as a time of crisis. Thankfully crisis does not have to be viewed as a completely negative situation. In fact, the Chinese have a definition for the term crisis that means “dangerous opportunity.” It is during this time of flux when new possibilities present themselves. The risk is high but so is the opportunity. For those who choose to work with youth these possibilities are the reality faced daily.

In this book we have observed how these challenges can be addressed and the opportunities seized. What has been presented has been ways to develop and sustain a healthy youth ministry. We began with an examination of a philosophy of youth ministry grounded in the word of God. As with the Christian life this is our road map leading us to the place the Lord wants us to be. This was followed with an examination of youth and youth culture in context. Both the developmental and social aspects of youth ministry showed us ways that we can connect with youth, meeting the needs in sensitive appropriate ways. Here too we examined the link between development and Junior High Ministry.



The danger in presenting this material is that the reader could walk away from this book feeling completely equipped to design and sustain an effective youth ministry in a local church. This would be similar to the first year psychology student who goes out and buys a couch and leather chair to begin their counseling practice. Hopefully, in this case, the opposite will be true. In observing the breadth and complexity of post modern youth ministry, you will be anxious to learn more. Of course you will be better prepared to be a great youth sponsor and excellent assistant to a fully educated and experienced youth pastor but you are aware there is so much more to know to develop a program of excellence.

## **More Challenge, More Opportunity**

When Jesus observed the masses, he compared them to sheep and to wheat. As sheep, he noted that they were “helpless and harassed, like sheep without a shepherd.” --Definitely a challenge! The gaping needs of youth, helpless and harassed, exploited by the music and fashion industries ready to follow someone who is willing to take the time to understand them. As wheat youth are seen as ripe for the picking. Sadly, Jesus observes that with this vast harvest the workers are far to few. He challenges you and me to pray that others would get involved in the harvest.

I feel an urgency about this task. I have seen some youth go from ripe to rotten. I have seen others harvested by thieves or at least less scrupulous workers. It seems there are scavengers in the fields taking as many as they can without a thought to the welfare of the youth. So it is exactly my prayer as I work in the field for others to come join me. Would you pray with me also, that there would be so many more workers?

Heavenly father I come to you because Jesus asked us to pray that you would send workers into the harvest. I thank you for the students who are taking this course and sincerely ask that you would prepare them and send them out into the harvest. We pray right now that you would call others that they may join us in the joy of the youth ministry harvest. Amen!

## **Farewell**

As I complete writing this book I do so with great anticipation of the fruit that will come from your ministry as a result of the principles you have learned. I wish you all of God's best both in your personal walk with the Lord and the educational pilgrimage you are taking!

Sincerely,

Ron Powell

# THE YOUTH MINISTRY LAY INSTITUTE

Other Books in this Self Study Series by Ron Powell

Each of these books represents a core subject in most Bible College Youth Ministry programs in the USA and in Canada. Each book has been compiled from actual youth ministry lectures.

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## FOUNDATIONS OF YOUTH MINISTRY

This book begins by working through a very detailed Philosophy of Youth Ministry that involves the theological and philosophical basis for a specific strategy of youth ministry. One-to-one ministry, junior high ministry, parent ministry, and student leadership are just some of the topics addressed in the various chapters. The book also gets behind the scenes to discuss various aspects of managing a ministry while balancing your life, leading a team of volunteers, as well as establishing a vision, goals and programs for a ministry.

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## LEADING A DISCIPLE MAKING YOUTH MINISTRY

This book attempts to prepare the reader to nurture faith development in young people. Beginning from a biblical perspective on discipleship in general, the focus will move to the call and character of the youth worker. From here we will examine the challenge of ministering in a post modern pop dominated culture. From here we will examine discipleship as it relates to the church and the outworking of a philosophy of discipling youth ministry.

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## UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

This book attempts to introduce you to two very important interrelated subjects; the study of adolescent development and the application of that knowledge to relating to youth. Obviously, each of these subjects requires much more study. This information will whet your appetite for further study while preparing a foundation for effective interaction with youth today.

The latest research on youth has been investigated while preparing this book so that the material is current and reliable. At the same time, the study of adolescence is constantly changing as youth and youth culture continue to change. Note also that there is a purpose to studying the biological, cognitive, psycho-social, and spiritual development of contemporary youth. The intention is that by understanding how teens think and feel, that the Christian teacher, sponsor, or minister can more effectively connect with youth.

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## YOUTH MINISTRY ISSUES

This book is designed to prepare the lay and professional youth workers for the complexities of youth ministry today by analyzing approaches to dealing with key issues and solutions to typical problems faced by teens. The chapters presented in this book are a compilation of lectures and notes on a number of important youth issues. Some of the material has been researched by students and edited in my office. In general this book should be used as a starting place to further study or a quick reference for ideas when helping a teen.